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THE

DECLINE AND FALL

OF THE

BRITISH EMPIRE.

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THE

DECLINE AND FALL

OF THE

BRITISH EMPIRE;

OR,

THE WITCH'S CAVERN.

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Mdl-C-79

SECOND THOUSAND.

LIBRA
ROYAL BOMB
BRANC
OF THE
ATIC

LONDON:
TRISCHLER & COMPANY, 18, NEW BRIDGE STREET.
1890.

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Dedicated to

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL,

WHOSE SYMPATHY WITH MODERN MOVEMENT IS
CANDIDLY AVOWED AND BOLDLY MAINTAINED

"I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see;
Saw the vision of the world, and all the wonders that would be."

"Human nature's human nature; and while human nature's human nature, human nature will be human nature."

Boy's Report of Bishop's Sermon.

"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

"I will rise and go
Down into Troy, and ere the stars come forth
Talk with the wild Cassandra, for she says
A fire dances before her, and a sound
Rings ever in her ears of armed men."

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THE DECLINE AND FALL

OF THE

BRITISH EMPIRE;

OR,

THE WITCH'S CAVERN.

CHAPTER I.

A LETTER OF EXPLANATION.

THOSE who are familiar with Professor Layton's valuable work, "Researches in Great Britain," may feel that some explanation of the publication of the present work is needed. This is given in the following letter, which I publish *in extenso*:—

"Melbourne, August 12th, 2992.

MY DEAR JACK,—

"You will, I am sure, be pleased to hear that I have decided to publish the story of my visit to the cradle of our race in 2990. You were among the first to welcome me on my return from that visit, and to listen to the

narrative of my adventures. You were the first to urge me to give the whole story to the public—advice which, for some time, I hesitated to follow. The story, however, leaked out, and became known to many friends, and this qualified publicity, led to my being requested to deliver a lecture on the subject in the National Hall. With some reluctance I acceded to the request, for to comply involved a considerable amount of labour, a portion of which consisted in reading, a second time, Layton's "Researches," in the same land fifty years ago, and obtaining suitable copies of the drawings which illustrate his book. Having consented to deliver the lecture, I threw all my energy into its preparation, and endeavoured to do my best in the hour and a half allotted to me.

"I had a good audience in the hall itself, and, I was informed, a much larger one by means of the audiphone. The audience listened to my account with that silent attention which gives pleasure to a speaker; and the papers, next day, were good enough unanimously to praise my work, and some even to urge me to give the result of my visit, with its strange sequel, to the public in a more permanent form.

"Having thus broken the ice, and procured by anticipation a favourable criticism, I the more readily accepted the advice, and proceeded to prepare my adventures for the press in a more detailed manner. Through various causes which I need not now specify, I was not able to complete my story till after the lapse of some months. At last, however, I finished my manuscript, and submitted it to a publisher, who was good enough to accept it, and to offer to bring out the book in the early spring. I did not

let you know of my intention sooner, as I was not sure that I should be able to finish the account to my own satisfaction, nor, when completed, was I quite certain that it would find a publisher. So, till these preliminaries were finished, I did not take anyone, except my sister and another, into my confidence. Now, however, as the book will see the light (I am actually revising the proofs) in September, I am no longer afraid of speaking about my 'forthcoming work.' You, however, are the first person, with one exception, outside the family circle, to receive the information which this letter conveys. By way of furnishing an effective contrast—I may not say background—to my picture of Ancient Britain, I purpose giving 'a bird's-eye view of the Republic of Australia.' Expecting a line of encouragement, if not of congratulation,

"I am, dear Jack, always
"Your affectionate friend,
"WILLIAM FURLEY."

CHAPTER II.

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE AUSTRALIAN REPUBLIC: THE START.

HAVING finished my University course, I received my degree from the Melbourne University at Easter, 2988. As I had taken honours in English, logic, and mathematics, my friends were sanguine enough to think that I might successfully enter the Metropolitan University with a fair

prospect of pulling off the blue ribbon. Fired by ambition, I eagerly accepted their advice, and began to prepare myself for the preliminary competition. Whether these hopes rested upon substantial grounds, or were due to the whisperings of vanity, will never be known, as my health gave way, and I had to abandon the idea, and take a long holiday in the sister province of Tasmania. Here I spent twelve months among the hills and gardens of that lovely island, simply recuperating my health. I shall never forget the hospitality of the islanders, or the beauty of Tasmania's daughters. I went from bay to bay, and from mountain to mountain, and never wearied of the charming scenery. Everywhere I was the recipient of that kindness and hospitality for which Tasmania is proverbial; everywhere I was struck by the beauty of its women and the manly strength of its men, and it was with much regret that at the end of twelve months I turned my steps homeward.

Before settling down to work—for I had abandoned the idea of pursuing my studies—my father thought it well that I should make a tour of the Continent; and it was thus that I got that "bird's-eye view of Australia" which I proceed to describe.

As the tour was to be a pleasure trip, a small party was made up for my benefit. The following were the members of it:—My sister Mary, and her friend, Ethel Maynard, with Miss James and Miss Marsten, as companions; Rayner Maynard, my fellow-student, with Mr. Henty and Mr. Sampson, our assistants. Nothing could have been happier than this arrangement, which made a perfect party, with plenty of variety, and yet a unity of spirit

which enabled us to move from place to place without a single unpleasantness or jar. Having completed our preparations, and said good-bye to our friends, we left Melbourne towards the end of September, 2989, in an electric car. Some of our party wished to travel by the aërial route—a course which would have given us greater freedom; but I must confess that I did not quite like the idea of aërial travelling, so the electric route was selected.

We started from the Central Station, on the twentieth of the month, amid the waving of hands and handkerchiefs from the many friends who had come to see us off for our three months' trip; for at that time we had no idea that with a short interval our wanderings would run into the best part of a year, extending to the Old World, and including a visit to the home of the Australian race.

The air of the afternoon was cool even to keenness; and we anticipated with pleasure the warmer latitudes for which we were bound; for our destination was Eyreton, *viâ* Albury. After we had passed the Great Reserves, which confine the capital city of Victoria on all sides except the sea, and prevent its expansion, we travelled at the rate of eighty miles an hour; yet not a movement could be felt, everything was as still and as noiseless as if we were in our drawing-room at home. We could walk and talk, or read and write, without the slightest interruption; but there was too much to occupy our eyes and our tongues to permit any inclination for these latter employments, except when anyone wished to note some point of interest, suggested by the scenes through which we were passing at such speed. The Reserves gave evidence of extensive and careful cultivation,

and here and there the hillsides were bright with spring bloom, and the fields covered with the early green, while the pasture land was filled with lowing herds and flocks of sheep. The artificial water was too artificial to be beautiful, yet it added to the charm of the scene below us.

So soon as we left the plain we found ourselves in the hilly country beyond Kilmore, and rapidly approaching the Goulbourn river, on the banks of which lies the large town of Seymour. Our journey was through an alternation of city and farm, town and country, hill and plain, thickly peopled; our view a succession of "crowded farms and lessening towers:" everywhere were evidences of prosperity and comfort, in the midst of natural and artificial beauty. We arrived at Albury in a little under three hours.

Here we stayed for the night, and as we were to leave again in the morning at eight o'clock, we just took a glimpse at the city before retiring. It is a well-built town, with fine public buildings (notably the town-hall and the cathedral); and large, well-kept parks; although the air was somewhat keen, the latter were crowded with people listening to the public bands and enjoying the coolness. We did not stay long, for we had a considerable journey before us on the morrow—upwards of 1,000 miles—so we went early to bed.

At eight o'clock punctually the next morning we left Albury behind us, and were steering for Eyreton, which we hoped to reach about nine o'clock that evening. We saw the usual features of Australia everywhere in rapid succession. From the tower which we ascended we obtained a wider horizon, and were much impressed by

the view which we thus gained. The numerous cities and towns, the agricultural and animal wealth, the scenes of natural beauty and sites of special interest were pointed out to us, such as the monuments which mark the resting-places, or supposed resting-places (for there is some doubt upon the subject) of Burke and Wills, the intrepid explorers of the continent, 1,000 years ago. When night fell upon the scene, it was interesting to watch the numerous lights which marked the situation of towns and cities as we swept past them.

A little after eight o'clock the guard drew our attention to a distant light, and told us it was Eyreton. We contemplated it with interest, for here we were to spend a week or a fortnight. It looked like a full moon, lying low on the horizon in the west. Every moment it grew larger, and seemed to hang over a vast volcano, whose lurid glow trembled beneath it. Presently, as we looked, the moon split into ten thousand brilliant stars, whose rays filled the field of vision. They grew larger each moment as we sped on, and separated themselves by wider intervals, until the whole rolled out before us as the lights of a great city. The sight was extremely charming, even fascinating. We were at last at Eyreton, arriving exactly at nine o'clock, hardly a minute behind our time. My father's agent, Mr. Lang, met us and took us to the Palace Hotel, where arrangements had been made for our stay in Eyreton. As we were tired, and there was plenty of time before us for sightseeing, we went to bed immediately after supper.

CHAPTER III.

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF AUSTRALIA: EYRETON.

RAYNER MAYNARD and myself had agreed overnight to make a tour of the city before our nine o'clock breakfast next morning. We were therefore up betimes and down early. What was our pleasure to find Mary and Ethel ready to accompany us!

"We thought," said Mary, "that we would give you a surprise, and join your excursion, if you did not object." We gladly assented. "But where," said Ethel, "shall we go first? We ought to have a guide."

"Let us find our way to the lake," exclaimed Rayner; and to this we all agreed. Twenty minutes' walking brought us to the extensive sheet of water, like an inland sea, lying calm and motionless under the newly-risen sun. The upper lake is about seventy miles in length and some forty in width in its widest part; but to the south is a much smaller lake, and the waters of the two are united by a narrow strait. The water is clear and deep, and abounds in fish, which furnish a rich harvest to the inhabitants of the city.

Numerous vessels, of all sizes, some very large, were lying peacefully at anchor near to the shore and well out in the lake. Early as it was, many people were pursuing their several vocations in garden and field, as well as upon the water. Eyreton is built upon the shores

of the lake, from whose water it derives much of its wealth, and the land around much of its fertility.

After watching the fishermen bringing their fish ashore, we turned our steps cityward, to get some general idea of the metropolis of Australia. The streets are extremely wide, over three chains; the footpaths occupying, each, nearly half a chain of well-paved space. In the centre of the broad street is a third footpath, on either side of which grow wide branching, broad-leaved trees for shelter and beauty. I am the more particular in noting these facts, as they are especially impressive to me, after my old world experiences, to be presently narrated. All the public buildings are massive and capacious, national schools included. The buildings of a private character deserve the same description in a lesser degree, for their construction is controlled by municipal statute, which demands a stern obedience to the laws of health, every room being suitable for human habitation. Hence every human being, however poor his condition, lives in a house which tends not to degrade but to elevate and refine his nature. The parks are numerous and extensive, and are adorned with statuary, trees of all kinds, and flowers from every clime; while in every direction the eye is refreshed by glimpses of water—a pleasant sight in a somewhat weary land. The public buildings, including the libraries, it should be noted, are beautified with choicest paintings; indeed, the greatest attention is bestowed upon everything that is regarded as belonging to the whole community. Everyone has an interest in the streets, the parks, and the public buildings, and can use them at all times, without detriment to the public service.

Individual rights are, in all cases, subordinated to the welfare of the whole community, whose political, commercial, intellectual, and moral sanity is necessary to the very existence of the individual, except in a state of savagery.

Health, comfort, leisure, are the needed conditions of individual development; and these are contributed, so far as they can be contributed, by the whole community to the whole of its members.

Such are the impressions that a first view of Eyreton gave us. We thoroughly enjoyed the early morning walk, but were glad to turn our steps towards our hotel, where we found, on arriving, the rest of our party awaiting breakfast. Our stroll had given us an appetite, and we enjoyed our meal without requiring the incentive which the many delicacies on the table would furnish to less hungry people. While we are breakfasting, and discussing in merry vein the prospects of our tour, I will quietly put the reader in possession of one or two facts of importance respecting the city. Eyreton has a population of about 150,000. As in all large Australian cities, the tendency to expansion, which was the disease of the ancient world, has been checked by a very simple remedy: the establishment and maintenance of large reserves, outside the city block, and the rigid enforcement of the municipal law referred to above. It thus became impossible for the city to expand indefinitely. The reserves checked its growth. Human rookeries were equally impossible, for the statute dominated all buildings within the city bounds. The reserves were leased to cultivators of the soil; and those around Eyreton were, at the time of my visit, green with

the coming harvest of wheat, Indian corn, &c., and bright with the delicate blooms of cherry and apple and peach trees. They were very extensive, consisting of many thousand acres. Some miles distant we saw the purple gloom of a vast forest, and were informed that it was the haunt of herds of buffaloes.

Everywhere we saw evidence of industry and applied knowledge. Here was an ostrich farm, there an orange grove; in a swampy plain were vast rice fields, on the hill sides vineyards just bursting into tender green, and the custard and pine-apple; while the tea plant, the arrowroot, and the guava were also much *en evidence*. Animal wealth was equally abundant: sheep, cattle, horses, camels, alpacas, kangaroos (cultivated for their valuable skin), emus, and other birds of richly-variegated and gorgeous plumage. There was, however, a scarcity of song birds.

But breakfast is finished, and I have to pay a visit to the President, Lord Lington, an old friend of my father, recently elected to occupy the high position of President of the Australian Republic.

Time had passed so pleasantly and quickly at the breakfast table that it was nearly ten o'clock before we rose from that meal. I had, therefore, to hurry off to the Senate House without making arrangements for the morning movements of the party.

I reached the House a little after ten, and learned that the President had arrived, and was in his private room. I sent in my father's letter, with my card, and waited in the library for the result. During the few minutes that elapsed before the reply came I entered into conversation

with one of the attendants, a fine-looking man of forty. Some remarks about Melbourne led to my asking whether he knew that city, to which he replied, "Yes, I know it well, sir; I was born there, and educated there. Do you know Professor Campbell?"

"Very well," I answered; "he was my mathematical professor at the University."

"Indeed!" the attendant replied; "he was mine some twenty years ago, when he was quite a young man."

"What! have you been through the University, then?"

"I have, sir; I took my degree there seventeen years ago."

I suppose my looks expressed surprise, for the man continued:

"I ought to have done better, sir; but education and ability are not all that a man requires. I threw away my chances, and now I am one of the hewers of wood and drawers of water. Some go up and some go down; I am among the latter, more's the pity, for I had capital opportunities."

"But," I remonstrated, "it is not too late to retrieve your position, you are still in the prime of life."

"Ah! I have lost heart, and worse than that, I have contracted habits that keep me down."

Before I could reply, I was summoned to the President's room; and could only say, as I gave my new acquaintance a kindly nod:

"Take heart, my friend, and do not lose hope."

Lord Lington received me with much kindness. He was a fast friend of my father's. "But I have not seen him," he said, "for many years; we read together at college,

but our paths separated in after life—he went into business, I into public life."

"In which you have been completely successful, Lord Lington," I ventured to say.

"Yes," he assented with a smile; "I have obtained my highest ambition, but whether the game is worth the candle I sometimes doubt. For three years I can do something more than administer the affairs of the Republic; and after, I may retain my title and become one of the Council of Advice to my successor. But," he added, "you are here," pointing to my father's letter, "to learn as much as you can of Eyreton and its ways. You had better begin to-day. An important discussion takes place at the meeting of Senators this morning; would you like to be present?"

I expressed my thanks for the opportunity. "This," Lord Lington said, handing me a card, "will admit you to my box—your sister is with you, so I have said, 'William Furley and party.'. I am busy now, for I preside at eleven o'clock, and must prepare for the meeting. To-morrow I hope to see you and Mary at dinner, at half-past five." With these words we parted, and I hurried away, delighted with my reception.

Lord Lington was a tall, well-formed, handsome man of fifty-seven. His features were refined, and the expression of his grey eyes kindly but firm, his complexion fair. I quite felt that he was a born ruler of men.

On reaching the hotel I found that all the members of my party, except Miss Marsten, had gone out on an exploring expedition; Mary's companion had, for some reason, not joined the rest.

"All out!" I exclaimed; "how tantalizing! Here have I a card, admitting me and party to the President's box at the House, where there is an important debate to-day."

"Oh! how interesting," exclaimed Miss Marsten.

"Would you like to go?" I inquired.

"Very much, indeed; what is the subject of the debate?"

"Rather a dry one, I fear; a question of the freedom of trade with China" (for Lord Lington had told me). "Do you still think you would care to hear it?" I asked.

"I think I would, if I may; but what will your sister think?"

"Oh, that is all right. Mary will be glad that there was some one to represent her; we must, however, make haste, as the Senate opens at eleven o'clock, and the debate begins early."

We were in good time to hear the great debate; the various boxes and galleries were full of listeners, evidence of the importance of the subject. All the senators were in their places on the floor of the Chamber; while the President, surrounded by his Council of Advice, occupied the dais. In an outer circle, a little behind, sat the several heads of departments, ready to give needed information.

When the expected motion was called on, a young man of about thirty rose in his place, and, bowing to the President, began his speech. After a few words of apology, delivered in an easy, natural manner, the speaker said: "I feel very deeply that the resolution which I have the honour to move is one of great importance, and that, if accepted, its application must be extended

to other countries than China. I am about to ask the honourable representatives of the whole of the Republic to reverse a policy that has obtained for hundreds of years, and under which, it is contended, the people of the Republic have prospered. Under such circumstances I might well be excused if I declined to proceed with my notice. (Cries of "No, no; go on!" came from all parts of the house.) But, fortified by the opinion of men of learning, and conscious of the support of a not inconsiderable body of public opinion, which has always existed on the vast continent, although it has not often been represented in this Senate, I am bold to make the attempt, which is formulated in the motion which stands in my name. That motion is, 'That the restrictions which embarrass the exchange of commodities between the Republic and the Chinese Empire be repealed.' These restrictions are of a burdensome character, impeding trade and enhancing the cost of living to the people of this country. The voice of Nature is loud and urgent in demanding her rights—that the fruits which she gives freely and spontaneously shall not be restrained by artificial restrictions. China produces, through the operation of various causes, tea, silk, and other commodities needful for the support and convenience of life, abundantly and cheaply. We foolishly refuse to receive these benefits; with less wisdom than our forefathers, we impose a duty upon these articles of consumption, and refuse to accept the bounties of Nature. Was ever conduct more fatuous and reprehensible? One country produces wheat—a necessity of life; another produces tea, sugar; each gives that which Nature intended it to contribute to the general welfare.

The exchange of commodities, thus produced according to Nature's laws, should be free, in order that widely-separated peoples, who are members of one family, may benefit by the bounties of Nature. Heavy duties restrict the use of these productions which were intended for the benefit of the whole world. They restrict, by enhancing their price, and thus placing them beyond the reach, or almost beyond the reach, of those whose means are limited. The duties upon tea and silk, for example, not to speak of other commodities, cost the people of this country a hundred millions a year. (Sensation, and cries of "No, no! absurd.") I can assure honourable members that I have not overstated the case; I have figures here which prove my contention up to the hilt, and I rely upon these to carry conviction to the Senate of Australia. The duty on tea is sixpence a pound. In a population of 400,000,000, who are a tea-drinking people, the quantity of tea annually consumed is, if all drank that beverage, 2,800,000,000 lb. per annum. Sixpence a pound would thus entail a cost to the community of not less than £70,000,000 a year; but I do not make the assumption that all are tea-drinkers, or that all drink tea to the same extent, so I reduce this amount to £50,000,000. A similar calculation will prove that another £50,000,000 is paid through the duties levied on silk and other commodities that are similarly taxed. It is true that much tea and silk used by the community are produced in this country, but the existence of the duty I refer to enhances the cost by at least the amount of the duty. For if the duty were repealed, tea and silk would be sold to the people of this country at prices less the duties which embarrass trade. This is perfectly

clear; nor will it, I am sure, be denied by any member of this honourable body.

But, it is replied, by maintaining these duties we are giving employment to a vast number of people who are engaged in the production of tea and the cultivation of silk in Australia. I am well aware of the force, the immense force, of this argument; and I proceed to show that it is fallacious; and that, even were it true, we are maintaining a large body of men at an extravagant and unnecessary cost. If China can produce the commodities referred to, and sell them to us at a lower price than Australia can produce them, it is evident that Nature never intended Australia for a tea-growing country. The labour now expended in producing tea is artificially sustained, and should be dispersed and distributed over other areas of industry, to its own advantage and that of the whole community; for its employment would then rest upon a stable foundation, and the community would have £100,000,000 a year more to expend in the production of other commodities, and would be enriched by their possession. But to come to my second point, that the maintenance of those engaged in the production of tea and silk, by levying a heavy tax upon the whole community, is a wasteful and extravagant proceeding. If the duty which I seek to repeal be necessary in order to find remunerative employment for those engaged in the industries protected, then the duty is a benevolent tax. By its means we raise a fund for the support of the tea-growers and the silk manufacturers. Such a course may be benevolent, yet it is wasteful benevolence, and ought to be corrected. We take at least £100,000,000 a year out of the pocket of the general com-

munity, in order that we may support those engaged in the industries referred to. £100,000,000 a year! This would give, if equally divided, £100 a year to one million families; that is, it would support five, or even six, millions of people in idleness. If all the tea and silk farms were turned into rice and sugar plantations, and those now exclusively engaged upon them were cast out of employment and could not obtain other employment, £10,000,000 a year would adequately support them without work. Am I not justified, therefore, in saying that our present method of furnishing employment (if that contention, which I do not grant, be correct) is wasteful and extravagant? Let the bounties of Nature come freely to our shores, and life will be easier and pleasanter to everybody; and, best of all, we shall be taking a step that will give emphasis and sincerity to the cry of the democracy, that all men—not those living in Australia only, but that all men—are brothers."

I have given the barest outline of the speaker's argument, but I have, I believe, not omitted any element of importance. The speech made a great impression, and the speaker was warmly applauded on resuming his seat. All sat silent after the cheering had subsided, for a short space, as if to give time for the argument of the speaker to digest. Presently there was a call for "Lington," "Lington," "the President," who was known to be opposed to the motion. The President, who is allowed to make two speeches on each question, rose slowly to his feet, as if he were realising the gravity of the occasion or the force of the speech just delivered. His rising was greeted with considerable applause, followed by a hushed silence, that not a word of his reply might be lost. After a few graceful words of

congratulation, addressed to the mover of the resolution, the President began his reply, which I summarise in the following report:—

"I have nothing to complain of in regard to the manner in which the honourable member has marshalled his arguments in favour of the motion he has urged the Senate to adopt. His estimates may be a trifle too sanguine, but I shall not complain of that. That the motion is deeply important goes without saying; and I shall refer to this later on. I doubt not the mover has spoken under a deep sense of its importance. I am at one with him in all that he has said of the bounty of Nature, using that term in the qualified sense which I shall presently describe; and I agree with him that Nature's bounteous gifts should meet with no restrictions on our side. They are the gifts of God to His children, and I believe that it would be the better for mankind were they accepted freely, and distributed with as little cost as possible to the whole community" (a sense of surprise seemed to pervade the Chamber, as if many had begun to suspect that Lord Lington was supporting the motion). The President continued:—"All this I gladly concede, and will presently show that the Republic, whose children we are, has steadily kept the fact in view in all its economic legislation (a sense of relief was apparent here); but I cannot admit that the commodities in favour of which the resolution is moved are the productions of Nature, in any true sense of the word. What are the factors of production? They are two: Nature is only one of them. The conditions of production, so far as Nature contributes to them, are—climate, soil, and the weather, which varies from year to year. Under the

operation of these conditions, China produces tea, silk, and other commodities. But are these conditions wanting in Australia? Certainly not; we know that they are as favourable to such productions in this country as in China. If this is so, and I know that honourable gentlemen will not deny it ("Oh, oh," and laughter), how is it that China can afford to undersell Australia? ("Because she can produce more cheaply.") Yes, and no; yes, if we leave out of account the penalty which China pays for her cheapened production; no, decidedly no; if we take all the producing elements into account. I have spoken only of one; there is another—man. It is man who, by the application of knowledge, skill, and labour, awakens into active exercise the productive powers of Nature. Man is the second factor. Now, it is not man degraded to a machine or a hand, but man considered *as man*, regarded as one of those brothers to which the speaker so eloquently referred in his peroration, awaking, I am sure, the sympathy of his audience. But man, engaged in producing the fruits of the earth for the benefit of his fellow-men is worthy of all honour. He must not be degraded below the level of his manhood. We demand that he shall have time for rest, recreation, enjoyment; that he shall be properly housed, fed, and clothed; that he shall have time and opportunity for improvement, for developing his true human nature. These demands have been enforced within the limits of all Australia. It was the wise aim of our fathers, who laid the foundations of this great nation, to make the human instrument of production as perfect as might be, considering its frail nature. We have demanded that the

hours of labour shall be restricted to a period consistent with the preservation of health; that the period of labour shall cease as strength decays. Would anyone wish to see an alteration in this respect? ('No'; and murmurs of approval.) But further, the unit of production is not the individual, but the family. (Loud applause.) The family has been wisely made the basis of the representative system of this continent; only those, as we are all aware, who have entered into the responsibilities of family life can exercise the privilege of the franchise. This fact shows the importance that our fathers (and we, adopting their sound conclusions) attached to the family as the unit of the State and the cradle of the nation. The second factor of production is man. The husband and his wife, with the four or five children (I speak of the average family which requires to be maintained by the husband and father's labour), these must be fed and clothed and housed as human beings; it is not enough that they be treated as beasts of burden. It is a fundamental principle that the unit of labour be treated as human beings, and this treatment involves food, clothing, shelter, education, and leisure. Is there anyone who desires its abandonment? ('No, no.') Such are the factors of production. They are, it will be seen, natural and artificial. Man, who in this connection is not a part of Nature, is the artificial agent; and it is his intrusion within the sphere of production that creates the difficulties of statesmen.

"It is easy to interfere unduly and unwisely; this was done in the Old World, with the worst results, so as to depress labour, and ultimately to annihilate productive energy. Wisely directed, that energy may be stimulated

to the highest degree, and exercise, indirectly, a beneficial effect, even upon those who treat it unwisely, either by reducing it to a condition of serfdom, or by letting it run riot and become anarchical, under mistaken notions of the equality of man. Let me repeat—climate, soil, of a suitable character, human energy directed by knowledge and skill:- human energy, and the latter factor properly regarded, demands as its natural right a sufficient portion of the thing produced for its maintenance and satisfaction. This is given in Australia. Is it given in China? ('No, no,' and much applause.) No one knows better than my honourable friend who has spoken, that the human factor of production in China is degraded and miserable. The Chinese labourer works fourteen or sixteen hours a day, with no weekly rest. He is badly fed and miserably clothed; he is ignorant and wretched, and often lays violent hands upon himself, in order to escape from his misery. Hence China is able to produce more cheaply than Australia. She produces at the cost of human happiness and life itself. For these reasons we decline to put her productions upon a level with those of America or Africa. In these countries inherent rights—rights demanded by human nature—are respected. Hence their productions are freely admitted into Australia. We do not need, nor do we demand, any other protection than that which Nature itself gives us: distance, the cost of transit, is a sufficient protection; the bounties of Nature, plus human labour, are permitted to come to us freely, and we welcome them with both our hands. China's cheap silk and tea are not the gifts of Nature; they are the products of starvation and slavery, of children's tears, of widows' sighs, of human degradation

and misery, and we'll have none of them. (Hearty applause.) Let me illustrate this position, for the sake of clearness. If China cultivated her fields with slave and prison labour, driving the wretched workers to the fields with the whip, or at the point of the bayonet, and was able thus to produce, at the lowest cost, whatever she desired to sell, would the honourable gentleman then advocate the opening of our ports to the products of slave and prison labour? I am sure he would not. Then he agrees with me, for the principle on which our present restrictions are based is the equalisation of the artificial, not the natural, conditions of production. He has well said that he feels his responsibility in moving this motion. Indeed, the motion is a deeply important one, for it seeks nothing less than the reversal of that policy which has obtained in this continent for hundreds of years. And when we look around us, and see the abounding evidence of prosperity, everywhere a contented and happy people, covering the vast continent with well-built cities and towns, and are made more sensible of our happy condition by a glance at the Old World, where the reverse of all this obtains, we may well reflect before we touch a single stone of that economic structure, so slowly built up, which thus protects and blesses our people. I move the rejection of the motion."

The President resumed his seat amid hearty and prolonged applause, which broke out again and again as he rose to acknowledge his sense of the honour done to him. The doom of the resolution was sounded, but I did not stay to hear more, for it was one o'clock, and lunch was at half-past one. So Miss Marsten and I

wended our way homewards, discussing the speeches we had just heard.

"Whom do you vote for, Miss Marsten?" I asked of my companion.

"Lord Lington, of course, Mr. Furley! I hope there is no doubt that the resolution will be rejected."

"Well, you know, life would be easier for some persons if it were adopted; tea and silk, and many other things would be cheaper; many things from India would be cheapened; for the principle of the resolution would, if it were adopted, open the flood-gates of Russia also."

"I have no doubt some things would be cheapened, but mere cheapness is not the object aimed at by great nations, or why should we not buy from a thief who stole the commodities he offers for sale, and can sell them cheaply? The pirates of ancient times could sell more cheaply than the honest merchant. Yet a nation dealing with them, knowingly, would have been held in reprobation."

"Well done, Miss Marsten! Lord Lington would have been grateful for your illustration. No; mere cheapness is not the final object of commerce. If it is our duty to buy honestly in the markets of the world, it must be right, and therefore our duty, to require, as far as we can, that the goods we buy have been honestly obtained, which is another way of saying (difficult though it be to make all persons see this) that those engaged in their production shall receive the treatment of human beings—that is, shall be honestly paid for them. There is Lord Lington's argument in a nutshell. But here we are at the Palace Hotel."

Mary and her friends had not yet returned; and I had

quite a sense of relief that I and my companion were back first. While I was getting ready for lunch I heard the deep, sweet tone of the organ accompanying a rich contralto voice, and was surprised, on looking into the music-room, where several persons were gathered, to learn that the player was Miss Marsten, and that the sweet, powerful voice was hers. Within the last half-hour my relation to her had undergone a considerable change. Up to the limit of that period I had regarded her, in the conventional way, as one occupying an inferior social position. Now her *personnel* had forced itself upon my attention. She was educated, thoughtful, accomplished; equal, in reality, to Mary or Ethel, although socially below them. This change in my sentiments found expression—on the return of Mary and our party, while we were waiting for lunch—in the suggestion that Miss Marsten and Miss James should lunch with us. To which my sister replied, "Of course not, Will; it's not desirable to be too intimate with them."

"Why not, my dear? they are ladies, of good education and manners."

"Of course, or they would not be suitable companions for Ethel and me; but it would be inconvenient to be on too intimate terms with them. Besides, it would not be pleasant for them, and would be a restraint upon ourselves. Men," she added, turning away, "don't understand these things."

Perhaps not, but I did not think Mary had so much pride, so I resolved to say nothing about my companionship to the Senate. I felt that it would give her, if Mary knew it, an unpleasant sense of surprise, and hoped that

Miss Marsten would be equally discreet. While lunch was proceeding, I told my friends of my visit to the Senate, and of the debate I had heard, giving them an outline of the speeches of Mr. Hoyte and Lord Lington.

To my surprise, Mary said, "I do not agree with Lord Lington; I think Mr. Hoyte is quite right."

"Well, dear, you will have the opportunity of arguing the matter with Lord Lington, for he has asked us to dinner to-morrow at half-past five."

"It seems to me absurd," Mary continued, "to think we are enriching the country by making everybody pay more for the necessaries of life."

"Of course, if that were the whole of the matter, but there is another view of the subject—we owe a duty to the Chinese, we are not merely considering ourselves. Look at the conditions under which they labour in order that we may buy cheaply."

"All conditions are relative," said Rayner Maynard; "conditions that are hardships to some, are not so to others."

"Well, the conditions are hard enough to the unfortunate Chinese, for their average length of life is much less than the average age of an Australian."

"Oh, that may be due," Rayner replied, "to other circumstances—climate, constitution, race. Experience has taught them, as it has taught us, how long and under what conditions they can best labour."

"As you and I, Rayner, attended the same professor, I am surprised to find you going over to the enemy so readily." At this Ethel laughed, and exclaimed—

"Rayner swears by Professor Mary, Will; she is the

latest professor; aren't you, my dear?" turning mischievously to Mary.

"Besides," said Mary, slightly blushing, "I am not sure that we are not wrong in the other part of the argument: the protection of our own people from the competition of what we call underpaid labour. There is nothing like experience to teach people on how much or how little they can live, and discharge all the duties of life. These things settle themselves in a practical way; we have fixed, arbitrarily, upon seven hours a day as the maximum period of labour; some people can work a good deal more, and are the better for it; some cannot work so long. Why not leave the whole matter to the free play of the fullest competition?"

"Yes," said Rayner, "let us all pull our best and the strongest win. I am for the fullest freedom in all economical and commercial questions. Think of £100,000,000 of money thrown away by our stupid policy! What immense wealth misapplied! If we can't hold our own in this matter of tea and silk—well, Nature has not intended us to produce tea and silk, and we must turn our energies to other fields."

"I can't forget, Rayner, that the Chinese are our brethren; and that we owe a duty to them as well as to ourselves. And the whole argument is contained in this position."

CHAPTER IV.

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF AUSTRALIA: THE MARBLE GATE—HOME.

But I am reminded that in this "Bird's-eye view of Australia" my object is not to talk but to see, so I must hurry into the streets of Eyreton and tell what I saw. They were full of people intent on business, or, like ourselves, on sightseeing. The graceful dresses—not like the awkward costumes of our ancestors—lightly covering and yet revealing the human form divine, with the rich and varied colouring, of which our fathers never dreamt, made up a beautiful and attractive sight. At four o'clock all business was suspended, and at five all labour, except private labour in the garden and the house, came to an end. At half-past six o'clock we were in the parks, which were well filled with people, listening to the excellent music of the public bands, under conditions that tended to banish care, and sweeten life. The people were of all sorts as well as of all classes—the good, bad, and indifferent mingling freely; and yet with a difference, for while the vicious, if there were such, were regarded as human beings, they were made to feel that virtue had its rewards which they could not share; and the impulse towards goodness coming from within was encouraged, by a kindly nod or friendly salutation, to develop into a habit of life.

Later, we visited the public halls, and heard an opera

rendered by some sweet voices, and set out by beautiful surroundings.

The next day Mary and I dined with Lord and Lady Lington. I do not refer more particularly to this, as time forbids; and refer to it only as it was the occasion of our introduction to their son, the Honourable Spencer Lington (Honourable, for the children—the children only—participate in the honour which the State bestows upon the parents). Through his invitation and arrangement I paid a visit to a beautiful spot, afterwards notorious for a terrible tragedy—the Marble Gates. The place so named was a lakelet in Simpson's Gap, at a considerable distance from Eyreton. It was surrounded by steep, precipitous heights, and the sun rarely fell upon the enclosed waters, which were intensely cold. Towards one end of the lakelet rose two massive granite rocks, like the lintel-posts of a huge gate; one could imagine that the stone gate had been torn from its hinges by some convulsion of nature, the resemblance was so perfect. The sides and top of the precipice were covered with climbers, and the hills around thickly massed with tall forest trees, while the whole was bright with flowers. Some distance from the Marble Gate was a magnificent building, the residence of John Rudolf and his wife; it was as massive as an ancient castle, and overlooked the gloomy waters —a curious situation in which to place one's home, I thought. But it looked out also over a wide-stretching, broken country of great fertility. We were introduced to Rudolf and his wife, and enjoyed their hospitality. The former had the reputation of a student, but I did not like the expression of his eye and mouth,

which I thought cruel; but perhaps I read into them, what I afterwards learned by the awful tragedy that occurred. His wife was a gentle woman of education and refinement. This excursion brought our Eyreton visit to a close.

From Eyreton we sped on to Cape Talbot, and looked upon the ocean that rolls between ourselves and the Old World. As we stretched our eyes across the sea, and remembered that beyond its furthest bounds lay India, China, the thought entered my mind that I would like to see the Old World, and compare it with the New World in which we lived.

In due course we found our way to Burketown, or Burton, named after the intrepid explorer of old times. As I looked upon the waters which washed the shores on which the city lies, and saw the fleet of ships which lay calmly at its feet, I thought of the unfortunate explorer's weary watch on these same shores 1,000 years ago, waiting for the relief which never came.

It was while we were here that the tragedy of the Marble Gates occurred. One morning we were horrified to learn that John Rudolf had been arrested for the murder of his wife. Her body had been found in the icy waters of the small lake; it exhibited marks of violence, and circumstances, which I need not detail, pointed to the husband as the murderer. A preliminary inquiry had been held, and the trial before the magistrates was to be held in a week. If he were convicted, it was satisfactory to know that swift and condign punishment would follow. So unusual an event caused great excitement. In the following week Rudolf was tried and condemned. His appeal

to the Jury of Equity deferred the final treatment of the case for another week. The jury found that all the equities of the case had been observed, and confirmed the sentence. The criminal was permitted the choice of one of the three modes of death sanctioned by the Republic—drowning, poison, electricity. He chose the last; and the following day expiated his offence in this way. It was sad to think of the violent death of this gentle woman by the hands of one who was bound by every obligation to cherish and protect her; sad to think that amid such surroundings of beauty and happiness a man could be found so indifferent to their influence as to plan and perpetrate so terrible a crime. But one learns that under all conditions human nature remains human nature, that circumstances do not fundamentally change it. A wider and fuller experience has emphasised this conclusion.

We visited Cape Yorke, the various points of interest in Queensland, and, about the middle of December, found ourselves in Sydney, on our way home. I need not speak of the great natural beauties of Sydney, its marvellous harbours and bays. I dwell only a moment upon our visit here, as it was here that the idea of visiting our old home was born and developed. At an evening party, given by the Governor of the Province, I met a Professor Fowler, a great antiquarian. He had studied widely things of antiquity, and was deeply interested in the Old World. We gave him some account of our Continental tour, to which he listened attentively. At the close of my narrative he said:

"Europe in her palmiest times could never compare with Australia, and never possessed more than half our

present population. Even Great Britain, one of the most prosperous countries of the Old World, never had a population of forty millions."

"And what is it now, Professor Fowler?" asked Ethel.

"Oh, now it is very small indeed; but," he added, turning the conversation, "why should you not extend your tour, and visit Old England? I have often thought I would like to make one of a party, and pay a visit to the old home."

"It would be delightful, wouldn't it, Mary?" said Ethel, turning to my sister. "Do you think it might be managed?"

"I am sure such a visit would be not only pleasant but instructive," continued the Professor. "I have carefully read Layton's 'Researches,' and find them full of interest. It would be doubly instructive to read them on the spot."

The idea took hold of me—indeed, we were all interested in it, and discussed it anew as we returned to our hotel.

"Suppose I communicate with father about it," I said, turning to Mary; and so we dismissed the subject for the night. The next day at breakfast Mary said, reverting to the subject:

"Do you know, Will, I think it would be best to wait until we can talk the matter over at home."

And thinking that Mary's influence would be more potent than my own, I consented.

"Meanwhile," she continued, "you could make the necessary inquiries, and arrange with Professor Fowler about the trip, if it comes off."

To this also I agreed.

"It will," the Professor said, "be time enough to reach England in May; but we could take Africa on the way, and spend some weeks, or even months, there. It will widen our experience."

We reached home in time to spend Christmas together, and received a hearty welcome from our friends, especially from those of our own household. During the course of the week following our return, I gave my father and mother a full account of our journeyings and adventures, concluding with Professor Fowler's suggestion. My father was kind enough to say that I had made good use of my opportunities, and did not negative Professor Fowler's proposal, neither did he assent to it.

"Time enough," he said, "to think over it, and to decide."

CHAPTER V.

HOMEWARD BOUND: AFRICA.

About the beginning of the year we received my father's decision, which, I am glad to say, was favourable to our plans. Towards the end of February or the beginning of March we were to start on our extended excursion, which was to include Africa, or a portion of it, and Great Britain.

I at once communicated with Professor Fowler, and began the necessary preparations for our lengthened absence from home.

During the interval that elapsed I thoroughly read and mastered Layton's "Researches." I read also several works on Africa, one a reprint of an amusing book published 1,000 years ago—H. M. Stanley's "Through Darkest Africa," a book which made a great stir in its day. The reprint was very ancient, some hundreds of years old, known only to antiquarians; it had been recommended to me by Professor Fowler; as descriptive of the very reverse of all that now obtains in what was formerly known as the Dark Continent, it is certainly amusing, and worth reading.

On the third of March we started by the electric route for Africa. Our party consisted of all the members of the former party, except Mr. Sampson, one of our assistants. We did not replace him, as his withdrawal only took place a day or two before we started, and we were unwilling to jeopardise the harmony of the party by employing any person at once available.

Professor Fowler and his assistant, a Mr. Thomson, joined us in the end of February, and made the acquaintance of my father, who was much pleased with both gentlemen.

Our immediate destination was Zanzibar, the eastern *entrepôt* of the Great Continent. Nothing more eventful occurred during the voyage than a severe storm, which came up from the South Pole, and caught us, on the fourth day from our departure, in the Indian Ocean. I had no idea, till this experience, of the force of the wind and the waves combined. The vast vessel was tossed about like a huge cork by the force of the water. The great waves, like small mountains, rose high over the side of the vessel, and threatened to engulf us; but we rode over them in safety, thanks to the skilful management

of our captain. On one occasion, through some mischance, a huge wave caught us before the vessel could rise on its crest, and gave us a blow which was felt in every timber of the ship, a large mass of water coming on board and sweeping the lower deck with great violence. We thus had a taste of its quality, and learned to respect both the storm and our captain's seamanship. While we were in the midst of the hurricane we witnessed an unwonted sight—one of the aërial vessels driven before the fierce tempest at a tremendous pace. She was evidently out of her course, and was vainly struggling with the adverse wind. We watched her for ten minutes, as she was blown across the line of our route at a tremendous rate (three miles a minute), and with the aid of our glasses followed her for some time. In reply to an expression of alarm for her safety, the captain assured us that she was quite safe so long as she eased the wind off her, as she was now doing, but that she was being driven by the fierce wind considerably out of her course. It certainly was an extraordinary sight to see a huge vessel flying high over our heads in safety, and to note the varying shapes that distance lent to her appearance.

The next day the storm had blown itself out; but a heavy swell, which made our vessel unsteady, followed, to the great discomfort of most of our party. In a few days, however, Zanzibar was in sight, and our inconvenience came to an end.

Seven days from Melbourne to Zanzibar! Only a day behind our calculated time, and this delay we debited to the storm fiend. On landing we were at once sensible of an immense change in the climate. This was still more

marked when we landed on the continent. As our arrangements included a visit to the Mountains of the Moon, or the Snowy Ranges, we were anxious to reach these regions with as little delay as possible. And when we came in sight of them! We looked upon masses of snow that had lain there for ages; and were told of rivers of ice, hidden in the inaccessible tops, which seemed to pierce the clouds. None of us had ever seen snow before. The year I had spent in Tasmania had been genial and warm, and Mount Wellington had not worn its snowy mantle. We regarded the dazzling white with admiration and amazement, enjoying the cool air after our late tropical experience. I shall not detain my readers in Africa, although we were detained there for nearly two months. I merely make one or two passing remarks. Its cities, towns, and crowded population, its fertile soil highly cultivated, its gorgeous bloom, its vast resources—all was deeply interesting; but the physical and mental character of its people was not that of the Anglo-Saxon race. They had lost the fair hair and blue eyes of the race; the fair complexion was darkened and somewhat sallow. This change was largely due, it was said, to the intermarriage of the Saxon and the negro races; though climate was also partly responsible for the result. The character of the Central African was also of a more languid type than that of the Australian; he had lost something of the Anglo-Saxon energy; and Professor Fowler explained that his political institutions were not of so thoroughly a representative character as our own. The people were more inclined to follow their political leaders than were Australians; climate, of course, plays some part in the

formation of a people's character. I have condensed the experience and observation of two months into these few sentences, as I am, equally with my readers, eager to reach the shores of Old England—the cradle of the Australian people.

CHAPTER VI.

ENGLAND.

In the beginning of May we started from Tangier on our adventurous voyage. The second night at sea brought us an unusual experience. About ten o'clock, a strange, weird sound broke upon our ears as we walked the lower deck. This was the syren or fog-horn, and informed the initiated that we were surrounded by fog. It was our first experience of the kind. In vain our eyes strove to pierce its white folds; in vain the electric light strove to pierce the watery veil.

It wrapt us round and round like a pall, and diminished our speed to one-quarter of its normal rate.

Early next morning we heard between the shrieks of the syren the reply of a distant horn, and thus learnt that another ship was near us. We all rushed on deck and listened. From behind the thick curtain came the wild shriek, as from a ghostly being, warning us of some unearthly danger.

About eight o'clock the fog lifted suddenly, and then we saw a large ship, distant about a mile, moving slowly,

like ourselves, on a line parallel with us, but in an opposite direction. All danger was over, but the experience gave us some definite idea of the peril to which those who go down to the sea in ships are exposed, even when guided by the best available human skill. Now that the fog was dispersing we were able to pursue our course at our former speed, which was henceforward maintained until we reached the shores of Old England.

The next morning the captain informed us that we might see land at any moment if we kept a sharp look-out. This information brought us all on deck, and sent us to the upper deck, glasses in hand.

Within twenty minutes Ethel cried out, "I see it! I see it!" to which there was an immediate response from several others.

"Yes, there it is; there's England!"

Rapidly the full extent of the English coast opened out before us. We were making straight for Plymouth. Very soon we could see forests of trees down to the very water's edge, and, presently, the lovely green of the grassy slopes, but no houses, although Plymouth was close at hand, and we were making straight for the harbour. When within a mile of the shore we hove to, and blew the whistle to announce our arrival. We waited eagerly for a sight of our kinsmen in the Old World; and presently two or three small boats were seen coming out of the harbour, each containing four or five people. When they reached us there was not a human being on board who was not looking excitedly over the ship's sides, there was not one who did not feel a thrill of painful pleasure.

The men were soon on board, and received a hearty

welcome from their kinsmen from over the sea. We all felt like crying—I know that I did; and I am sure I saw tears in the eyes of Mary and Miss Marsten. After the lapse of a quarter of an hour, during which period we freely interchanged question and answer, I began to observe our kinsmen more closely. I was struck with the vigour and the freshness of their complexions. There was a rude independence and freedom about them that proclaimed them a dominant race. We felt proud of our ancestry. They told us that we could enter the harbour, and find deep water behind the mole, or all that remained of the ancient mole. So taking their boats in tow, the captain ran his vessel into the harbour, and lay her to under the shelter of the ruined breakwater. We now saw lying before us a small village, built on the site of ancient Plymouth, and lost no time in getting ashore, where we found the whole village ready to welcome us.

The village contains some six or seven hundred inhabitants, and of these fully two hundred men, women and children, were gathered on the beach to receive us. When they understood that we were Australians, they set up such a cheer as warmed our hearts, and made us feel that there is something after all in blood. The Professor endeavoured to make a speech, but after a vain attempt broke down, and burst into tears, in which emotional expression I fear I must confess several of our party as well as the islanders joined.

"Never mind," said the sympathetic Professor; "let us have another cheer," an invitation which received a hearty response.

The women were remarkable for their rich colour, the

children for the fairness of their skin; I had seen nothing like it except in Tasmania; but the fair islanders cannot compare with the English. This fact was more deeply impressed upon me when I came to know the women of the higher class; for those we now saw were not of that class. The reception they gave us was most kindly, their hospitality unbounded. During the two days we were with them everything was done to make our stay pleasant, and not a single thing was accepted by way of remuneration; although we gladly left behind us some mementoes of our visit, and invited the whole village to visit the ship and partake of our hospitality.

The houses in which the natives lived were exceedingly small, the rooms very cramped and confined; but they were not without comfort. I daresay one would get accustomed to them in time. The people lived chiefly by fishing and agriculture; but some cultivated sheep, and were owners of flocks, numbering several thousands each. The fortunate possessors of these flocks were better off, and lived in large and more commodious houses. They were the gentry, and were better educated and more refined in manner and appearance. Their clothing also was of better material, but was, to our eyes, extremely inconvenient in shape and make. Behind and around the village were the cultivated land of the islanders, which seemed to be very fertile. To the left of the village was a thickly-timbered forest, Mount Edgecumbe, the haunt, we were told, of wild boars. The country was everywhere well wooded —indeed, heavily timbered, and only required clearing to make room for a large population; although I fear the intense cold of the country will always be a drawback to

settlement. Professor Fowler's statement that the place had formerly a population of a couple of hundred thousand seemed almost incredible. Equally so was the information that the harbour was then the resort of thousands of large ships every year. The inhabitants informed us that the winter had been unusually severe and prolonged, and that cultivation in consequence was in a very backward state.

We had heard or read of boar hunts in the Old World, and were glad, therefore, to learn that one was to be specially arranged for our edification and amusement on the morrow. During the night a storm, coming up from the south, passed over the place, but the morning was comparatively fine, and towards noon the rain and mist had cleared away. After lunch we sallied out with our island friends, many of whom were mounted on hardy little horses. Mounts were also found for the several members of our party. With the help of half a dozen fine dogs, of a different breed from those known to us, several boars were hunted out of the forest, and killed with spears and long-handled knives.

Such hunts are not without danger, as we learnt from our own experience; for one of the brutes came rushing down the hill, when driven from its lair, and, ripping open one of the dogs in its course, made straight for my sister, who was sitting carelessly on her pony. There was a loud and anxious cry from those in pursuit; and before we well knew what was the matter, her pony was down, and the boar, foaming at the mouth and mad with rage, was rushing hither and thither in our midst, before it was despatched by one of the hunters. How we escaped without serious injury was a marvel. But I had had enough

of such hunts, which seem to me to be a cruel kind of sport. The natives enjoyed the excitement amazingly. Mary and Ethel received the tusks of the slain boar, as a memorial of the day's sport, which was concluded with a supper, given by one of the gentry to the members of our party.

It would have given us much pleasure to remain among these kind people a little longer; but as we were anxious to reach London with as little delay as possible, and as the weather was unsettled and damp, we determined to hasten our departure. We took this step with less reluctance, as we proposed to return to Plym—as the village was called—later in the season, when we hoped for pleasanter weather.

The morning after the boar hunt we left the harbour early, amid many demonstrations of regard from the islanders. As the storm of the previous day had brought up a heavy sea, which rolled in upon the shore with great violence, causing a great roar that could be heard for many miles, we stood out from the coast. We were, however, well within sight, and could at times hear the thundering roll of the surf breaking upon the shore. As we passed along, the various spots of interest were pointed out and noted. Nearly every part of the land visible was thickly clothed with forest trees; and here and there a small village could be seen, planted in some spot of vantage protected from the sea, and yet giving the inhabitants access to the ocean for fishing purposes.

We were soon passing the Isle of Wight, formerly the favourite resort of England's most influential queen, Victoria, now covered with trees, yet showing patches of cultivation and a few houses. Passing Southampton, we

were informed that what was formerly known as "Southampton Water" was quite silted up, and that the silting was still going on, extending to the sea outside the harbour. With the aid of our glasses, we caught a glimpse of the village, which was surrounded by "clearings," which were under cultivation, for the land was very rich.

About noon I saw the captain and Professor Fowler come from the map-room, glasses in hand. As soon as they joined us, these were directed towards the shore, about five miles distant, with great intentness. The rest of our party followed their example; but we could see nothing of interest. All that I could discern were huge waves rolling inwards, and breaking with a thundering noise upon the shore; the broken water rushing upwards, and the white spray casting itself into the air like thick smoke. As I watched this for some time, I could fancy I heard the *skither* of the water as it rushed over the shingle, as if it would devour it. After looking for some time, Professor Fowler said, "Yes, that is it; that is the site of Brighton, a place of great importance when England was in her prime. It had then," he added, turning to Ethel, "a population of nearly 150,000 people, and was a fashionable resort; I can't see now a single habitation, can you?"

No, not a trace of human life could be discerned. Sea birds flew high over the breaking waters; but of other life there was none. We expressed our amazement.

"One of the kings of England had a palace there, known as the Pavilion. The place used to be thronged with the fashionable life and wealth of England in the

nineteenth century. Now not one stone is left upon another, and the sea rolls over the bones of hundreds of thousands who once lived and enjoyed the sun there. Alas for man!"

We stood contemplating the scene in silence until our good ship carried us far beyond all that remained of Brighton. Shortly we came in sight of the white cliffs of Dover, and were greatly moved. They had dazzled the eyes of the great Roman Conqueror three thousand years ago, and had bidden defiance to the wasting energies of time. They had awakened the admiration of Albion's children, and inspired the songs of her poets. "The white cliffs of Albion" were familiar to all minds. We seemed to be looking upon old friends, and turned our glasses eagerly to them. On the heights above we could make out a small village, the sails of a primitive windmill, and a herd of cattle. On we swept, and, passing Ramsgate and Margate, bent our course towards the mouth of the celebrated Thames. Strange! that as we passed the sites of Ramsgate and Margate dim memories began to stir within me as if I were returning to once familiar scenes, or had seen the places in some other state of existence, or in dreams. About six o'clock we reached Gravesend, and here the captain proposed to remain, for the depth of the Thames was not sufficient to enable him to lie nearer to London, distant about thirty miles. At one time ships of large tonnage could lie twenty miles further inland, but now the river higher up was shallow and full of obstacles. Hundreds of years of disuse and neglect had obliterated its numerous docks and filled the basins with silt. Many boats came off to us the moment we lay to, and the boatmen were

eager to take us ashore. As they were accustomed, from time to time, to the visits of large ships which carried off wool and other produce, our arrival did not arouse so much excitement here as at Plymouth. We could not go on to London that night, so we resolved not to go ashore till the morning. There was nothing special to be seen in the villages, which were visible here and there. However, we made inquiries as to the best means of reaching London, and arranged for our next day's trip.

In the morning, at ten o'clock, we were all "aboard" a lumbering coach, drawn by four horses, and shortly after that hour we started, the driver of the coach cracking his whip, and the guard blowing his horn. Thus we started for London. The road was fairly good, although it had been recently flooded with water, and was in places sodden in consequence. Our road for a while lay through forests of trees, that had a strange look to our eyes; for in winter they lose their leaves, and had not yet reclothed themselves with their foliage. They were just budding into leaf, and although the green was delicate, yet the general appearance of the forest was desolate. Now and then we passed a small collection of houses, and saw fields under cultivation. These became more numerous and extensive as we neared London. Cultivation was carried on by the rude appliances of ancient times; yet, I daresay, they were effective for the purpose, for the islanders were able to provide enough food to supply their own wants, as well as something for exportation. Between one and two o'clock we came in sight of London, the capital town of Great Britain, and rattled through its main street at great speed, with

horn accompaniment, many of the population turning out to witness our arrival. We drove up before the door of an hotel, around which were gathered a number of poorly-dressed people, who seemed anxious to do anything that we required.

CHAPTER VII.

LONDON IN 2990.

I WAS now at last in London: London, of which we read in ancient history. We had learnt that when England was in her zenith, London was the heart of the world; that her merchants covered the seas with their ships and their commerce; that her capitalists found money for every commercial and speculative enterprise; that she was the centre of all intellectual movement, philosophy, art, science; that nearly all civilising influences went forth from the Thames; that it was the home of a dominant and governing people, which ruled one-third of the human race. As I looked around me the story seemed like a fable; for London lay before me—a small town, badly built; the streets narrow, and often crooked, still narrower alleys lying behind them. The houses were small, in the principal streets of only one storey, occasionally of two storeys; in other streets they consisted usually of but a ground floor, and in the alleys were wretched huts. The larger streets, however, were well paved with stone. Internally, the rooms, even in the largest houses, were small. A room 18 ft by

21 ft. was considered large; and rooms of that size were rare exceptions. The population was about 10,000; but there were many villages within a radius of ten miles; altogether, the population did not number 20,000 people. The houses were usually built of a light-coloured brick; but the better class were of stone, taken from the ruins that lay beneath our feet—the remains of the London of old days.

The streets at this hour were well filled with people, who moved about busily; some well wrapped up, for the cold was intense. We were glad to get into the shelter of one of the best of the many hotels of the place. Here we got immediate shelter and warmth; and presently a good hot lunch, which we enjoyed, after our long cold drive. The rest of the afternoon and evening was spent in observation and inquiry.

The country in the immediate vicinity is chiefly agricultural, and the forest land is, consequently, at a considerable distance from the town. The principal cultivation is to the south and the west of London. Beyond the cultivated area are large sheep farms, in the hands of the wealthier gentry, who, we were informed, were extremely exclusive and proud. Fortunately, one of the leading gentlemen at Plymouth had given me a letter of introduction to the prince, or president, who was known as Prince Albert.

The day after our arrival in London I called at this gentleman's residence—a well-built comfortable stone house, known as the Palace. Two soldiers guarded the entrance of the grounds, but did not interfere with my approach to the house. On making known my business, I was

courteously requested to enter my name in the visitors' book, and leave my card. This I did, and sent in my letter of introduction. I was informed by a gentleman in attendance upon the Prince, that his Highness (for that was his style) would communicate with me. I must confess to a sense of disappointment—of almost resentment. I had come a distance of 12,000 miles, from a great nation, where I could speak freely with its President as his equal, and this petty princeling would "communicate with me"! I laughed down my rising indignation.

Next day I had a visit from one of the Prince's subordinates, a gentleman in uniform, who told me that his Highness would receive me that afternoon at four o'clock. At that hour I again called at the Palace, and was ushered into the august presence of Prince Albert. I found him surrounded by a number of gentlemen, with whom he was engaged in conversation. The Prince bowed slightly when I was presented to him, and immediately entered into conversation with me. He was a young man about thirty, reserved in manner, yet courteous and pleasing. He was well informed, and had been well educated. In less reserved moments, I learned that he was fond of quoting from ancient classical authors, and was familiar with the pages of Horace and Virgil. The other members of his Court were equally well-informed men. They were all, including the Prince, much interested in Australia, of which country they had a very imperfect knowledge, as well as of the world at large. For they were a very insular people, with strong prejudices, especially in regard to democratic institutions. After considerable time had been spent in pleasant conversation, I made my bow, and departed, the

Prince graciously shaking hands with me. After my first formal interview, my intercourse with the Prince and the leading gentry of the place became of a more familiar character, and their kindness and hospitality were extended to the several members of my party. Indeed, some of them became extremely intimate with the ladies of the Prince's household, as well as with the families of the principal gentlemen of the place. Great was the amusement we derived from their strange social ways; equally great, doubtless, was the amusement they derived from our ideas and habits. The New World was very much a *terra incognita* to them; they were out of its swirl and progress, and lived contentedly in the delusion that they were the world.

The weather, I have remarked, was intensely cold, and the week of our arrival brought us a strange experience. It began to snow! It was a pleasant sight to see the beautiful white flakes falling softly without noise to the ground, and to watch them gradually covering and hiding the streets from view, till all was veiled in a beautiful white mantle. The snow continued falling for a couple of days, until it was eighteen inches or two feet in depth, and a number of labourers had to be employed to clear the streets. The snow was followed by several weeks' fine weather, which advanced the vegetation immensely. It did not, however, interfere seriously with our enjoyment; for invitations to lunch, dinner, and evening parties showered upon us.

While the snow was still on the ground, one of the gentlemen proposed that we should make an excursion to Palace Hill, about seven miles distant, from which he said

a beautiful view of the country covered with snow could be obtained. The party, which included Mary, Ethel, Maynard, Fowler, and myself, consisted of ten persons; two of whom carried rifles of a peculiar make. On my remarking them, our host, Lord Heathfield, explained that it was safer to take firearms, as the country below Palace Hill was infested occasionally by wolves, and they might be troublesome after the snow.

When we reached the hill I have mentioned, a beautiful sight lay before us—a wide stretch of country clothed in white! For Palace Hill (why Palace Hill nobody seemed to know) commanded an extensive view. We continued our excursion to the south, or south-east, some two or three miles, and crossed a wide cutting, evidently artificial, (though nobody could explain its origin), and came across some old ruins, evidently the remains of some ancient building of importance. As we were returning to the hill there was borne to us, on the wind, a deep yelping cry, coming from the forest in a valley below us. Immediately one of the party exclaimed, "Wolves!" and advised a hasty retreat. We put our horses into a gallop, but before we reached the top of the hill we could see, on looking back, a long grey line of living things rushing on with long heavy strides, at great speed. The wolves, indeed, were after us, and were gaining upon us. Night, too, was falling, and we were miles from safety. We continued to push on, and our horses needed no spur or whip, for they were as conscious as ourselves that there were enemies in pursuit.

On, on, the brutes came, with their great red tongues hanging out of their mouths. Presently one of our party

fired; a loud report—for the islanders use a detonating powder—followed, and one of the wolves fell. The pack stopped; another of our party fired, and another of the brutes fell. While they were devouring their fallen comrades we dashed on at a good speed, and placed considerable distance between ourselves and our pursuers. But only for a time, for soon we heard again the fierce deep cry of the pack, and knew that they were on our track once more. Turning in my saddle, I saw the dark shadowy forms of some thirty or forty wolves, and could distinguish their great red tongues, so near were they. Again our escort halted and, at the "Steady, boys" of Lord Heathfield, fired, bringing down two more of our pursuers. Again they were checked in their career, and again we fled on, making considerable progress, only, however, to find that our enemies were once more in pursuit of their intended victims. Again and again at the right moment our valuable escort came to our rescue, until the lights of London could be seen in the distance. On the last occasion our defenders, waxing bolder, fired charge after charge into the pack, making great havoc in its ranks. Before the wolves recovered from this volley we were under the protection of the friendly lights of London, and were safe. It was an exciting close to the day's excursion, for we, being fairly safe, thoroughly enjoyed it. We were none the less thankful to find ourselves under the shelter of the hotel, and, later on, partaking of a hearty supper, and relating our experiences, for the benefit of Miss Marsten and Miss James.

We learned that the country to the north was infested with wolves, which did considerable damage to the flocks

of the sheep farmers; but that they were not usually as troublesome in the south, except after a severe and prolonged winter, such as this must have been.

CHAPTER VIII.

LONDON SOCIETY IN 2990.

WHILE I was making the acquaintance of the people, inquiring about their social habits and industrial pursuits, and getting a general idea of England as it now is, for purposes of comparison, Professor Fowler was pursuing his investigations in another quarter. He visited the various villages around London, followed the course of the Thames, examined various remains, and took a general interest in excavations that were being carried on in several places with the utilitarian purpose of providing well-cut stone at a cheap price for building purposes. That object, I need not say, did not enter into the Professor's pursuits.

He made numerous inquiries respecting traditionary sites, and paid several visits to the ship at Gravesend, to obtain books of an antiquarian character, which he had brought with him from the Antipodes.

One of the excavations that was being worked was near the town, and this the Professor regularly visited. Just below it, to the north of the Thames, was a small lake surrounded by swampy land. This sheet of water attracted his attention, and he identified it with St. James's Park of

former times. On one occasion he took me for a somewhat lengthened excursion round the windings of the river, in an easterly direction, until we reached a place where the Thames broadened and spread out into a swamp, which was covered with rushes and reeds. A good deal of the land in this direction must have been often under water, for it was low-lying. But the Professor's chief attraction was the excavation that I have already mentioned. I did not know the object of all his examinations and inquiries, but suspected it was of an antiquarian character. Ethel, to my surprise, seemed to enter heartily into the Professor's pursuits, and often joined him in his investigations during the day, assisting him in looking up his references in the evening. Mary, Rayner Maynard, and myself therefore often spent our evenings alone. I thus sometimes wished that Miss Marsten and Miss James could share our companionship, and help to enliven us after the wearying pursuits of the day. To my surprise and delight, one afternoon I saw Mary in affectionate and confidential talk with these ladies; Mary was always kindly, but maintained a courteous reserve in all her intercourse with them—a reserve which checked the expression of warm feeling. The change in her manner was followed, to my still greater pleasure, by an invitation to the two young ladies to dine with us; and henceforth, I may anticipate, they were admitted without reserve to the heart of the party. Whence this change? I did not like to ask, for I knew Mary's nature, and knew that she would take me into her confidence when she thought fit; but I so far noticed the change as to say with a pleasant smile, "I am glad, my dear." To which her only response was an answering

smile. However, the next day, during the morning, when we had a little time to ourselves, she referred to the change, and gave me an interesting account of the conversation and experience which led to it. I shall not relate this in the exact words of my sister.

Mary, Lady Ella (the eldest daughter of Lord Heathfield), and Ethel were on the previous day walking together in some part of London, their companions a little in the rear of the three ladies. As the party were passing a poor woman of the vicious class, to whom I had several times when with my sister addressed a few kind words, Mary stopped and spoke to her, the other ladies, except Miss Marsten, after a moment's hesitation, passing on. On her rejoining the party, Lady Ella said:

"Do you know who that is, Miss (she called her Miss) Furley?"

"Poor thing!" replied Mary; "I fear she is dissipated and very miserable."

"Oh, she's worse than that," the lady replied; "she belongs to a class of women that no respectable people ever speak to or notice."

"Indeed!" quietly replied Mary. "She needs all the more that someone should befriend her; she is still human, and a woman."

"Oh, she has forfeited all claim to womanhood; she can't be recognised or spoken about in respectable society in England."

"Are vicious men treated in the same severe way in England?" asked my sister.

"They ought to be, but society makes more allowance for them; therefore, it is not improper to recog-

nise or speak to them, if they belong to one's own class."

"Well," replied Mary, "they are both, men and women, human, and should be treated with forbearance and kindness; but it is the woman, surely, who is entitled to the greater forbearance and sympathy—sympathy which may call out the latent good that is in every human heart, and so reclaim her from a life of evil, and restore her to the society of her friends."

"Such a course is quite impossible for one who has fallen in that way; she can never be restored to the society of her friends, except in the case of the lower classes."

They were walking in a part of London which was frequented by the poor, and at this moment they met a man, mean and shabby in appearance, who lifted his hat respectfully, and took his pipe out of his mouth (all men in London seem to smoke) as the ladies passed. Lady Ella went up to him, and speaking in the kindest way, asked him about his wife and children, and then gave him a few shillings.

"That's one of my poor," she explained.

"And will he take money from you?" asked my sister.

At this question Lady Ella opened her eyes and laughed merrily.

"Why, poor fellow, of course he will! We do lots of things for the poor. Haven't you any poor in Australia? Dear me, what should we do without our poor?"

"Yes, we have poor people in Australia, but we don't assist them in that way. They get all the help which they need, as a matter of right. But beyond this necessary

help there is much that we can do. We can sympathise with and advise them. They know that they are not being patronised, and we know that they are not expecting some gift as the price of their docility and obedience."

"I should not care to live in a place where all people are equal in that way. God always intended that there should be poor, and that different classes should exist."

"Of course," Mary replied, "there will always be poor, through misfortune, as well as from viciousness of life; and different classes must always exist—of course."

"And here," said Mary, in relating this conversation, "I halted lamely, for I thought of Miss Marsten, and was quite unable to conclude as I intended, namely, that such social differences should be emphasised as little as possible. For my own behaviour, dear Will, had strongly emphasised the differences between Miss Marsten and myself. I was reminded of this," she continued, "before our walk terminated, by Lady Ella, quite innocently.

"'Who,' she asked, 'is Miss Marsten? I see that you don't treat her as an equal.'

"I explained that she was my companion.

"'Is she a lady?' she continued.

"'Oh, yes; of course she is.'

"'I mean,' she explained, 'is she a lady by birth?

"'I don't quite understand,' I replied, 'what you mean by a lady by birth.'

"'Why, if her father were in trade or business, we would not say she was a lady; and, unless, under very exceptional circumstances, would refuse to admit her into our society. Society is very refined, and that refinement

makes it highly exclusive, not in a vulgar way, but instinctively.'

"'Miss Marsten's father was an eminent clergyman, who died at an early age, and left his family badly off. She has been well educated, and is ladylike, as you see, and accomplished. She paints, plays, and sings, and is clever. Her position with me is not regarded as in any sense derogatory to her; but of course, it makes a difference in her relation to me and my friends.'

"'Why, my dear,' she was kind enough to say, 'she is a lady born; and if her education and accomplishments are equal to her birth, the fact of her poverty should give her a claim upon the sympathy of other ladies. Forgive me,' she said, smiling, 'we are strange beings. Here am I reading you a lecture in exchange for the one you read me half an hour ago, and both are on the same subject—sympathy.'

"She is very sweet, Will," said Mary, "and she's not responsible for the strange ideas of the people around her."

It was my turn to smile now, for my dear Mary, like many another listener, was fitting the application of the sermon to the rest of the congregation. I was pleased at the change in my sister, for a selfish reason. For Miss Marsten was a brilliant talker, and beautiful in face and figure, pleasant to look upon (though I had only become aware of this quite recently), and brought plenty of life and spirit into our party. She had an idea that the change I have mentioned was due to me. I read this in the grateful look she gave me several times during the course of the evening; and when she said good-night, the warm pressure of the hand which

I received—the first time I had shaken hands with her—expressed the same gratitude. Nor did I then undeceive her. Her grateful looks were pleasing; and besides, I think I had a hand in bringing about this change in the relations of the several members of the party.

CHAPTER IX.

LORD BEACONSFIELD'S STATUE.

On the afternoon of the following day Professor Fowler came to lunch in a state of great excitement.

"Eureka! Eureka!" he exclaimed, "I have found it! I can now reconstruct the map of ancient London."

Our interest was aroused by his exclamations and his manner; for he was striding about the room, waving his hands.

"What have you discovered, Professor?" asked Mary, with vivacity.

"Lord Beaconsfield's statue," he answered.

Mary's countenance fell; nor did the information greatly excite any of the party, except Ethel.

"Who was Lord Beaconsfield, that he should have a statue?" inquired Maynard.

"Lord Beaconsfield, Lord Beaconsfield," answered the Professor emphatically, "was one of England's greatest statesmen, given rather much to epigram and mystery, yet a wise and far-seeing man. His genius was of an Asiatic, rather than an English character, yet he was a great states-

man; and under his rule—for he was Premier of England—England reached her prime, and became a controlling political force. After his death, in 1881, the grateful country erected a statue to his memory in Parliament Square, close to the walls of Westminster Abbey; *and I have found it!* That fixes the site of the Abbey, and enables me to plot out the London of that century!"

"How deeply interesting!" said Ethel. "But how do you know that the statue is his?"

"Oh, no one could ever forget that face who had once seen it. The general contour, the pose of the head, the mobile lips—I will show you his likeness," he exclaimed, rushing out of the room. Presently he returned, bringing one of his antiquarian books, and turning over the pages rapidly, put his finger upon a very old engraving of the ancient statesman. "There!" he exclaimed, "that is Disraeli, or Lord Beaconsfield!"

Our interest was aroused. As we examined the engraving, Professor Fowler continued:

"We will now go and compare the statue with the engraving. Oh, there's not the shadow of a doubt about it," he added, preparing to leave the room.

"Let us have some lunch first, Professor, if you please," said Mary; "after that, we will place ourselves under your direction for the rest of the day, if you like."

The Professor laughed, and assented to this most reasonable suggestion, as lunch was already on the table.

Our visit to the excavation introduced us to the statue that had aroused the Professor's enthusiasm. There could be no doubt that, if the engraving represented Lord Beaconsfield, the statue was of the same person.

"This, then, is Parliament Square, where the statue was erected; a few yards from this spot lies the site of the ancient Abbey. If we could only open out that mound yonder," pointing to an elevation some yards nearer to the Thames, "we should come upon its foundations and ruins. This discovery is most important."

It required a fuller and more accurate knowledge of English history than the majority of us possessed to enable us to share the Professor's enthusiasm. Yet we were interested, and awaited further developments. He now abandoned his excavating work, and devoted himself to the study of his books and maps, alternating such studies with little excursions to various districts within a slight radius of Parliament Square. We were made aware of the results in a day or two, and listened to them with gradually increasing interest. After dinner, one evening, at which Lord Heathfield and his daughter were present, the Professor brought out an ancient map of London—as it was in the nineteenth century—and exhibiting it to the company, said:

"There! that is the London of 1,000 years ago! Here is Parliament Square. Taking that as the centre of a circle, with a radius of five miles, we include the principal portions of old London. Within that space there was a population of four millions of people."

"Four millions!" exclaimed Lady Ella; "and now there are not 20,000!"

"The population of the whole of London was nearly five millions at the period referred to. The present London is on the site of what is marked on the map as Pimlico, the lake near was St. James's Park, as I suspected;

beyond the lake was Trafalgar Square (Nelson's monument lies buried there, or what remains of it); here is Waterloo Place (we can visit these places now); underneath its cultivated ground lie memorials of the Crimean war."

Thus he went on, identifying various localities known to us.

"You remember," he said, turning to me, "our long walk, and the swamp crowded with rushes and reeds, in the east. Here it is—the India Docks, where ships of great tonnage once lay; the swampy land, lying nearer to Westminster, was Whitechapel, the haunt of poverty and crime."

"What was the population of England in those days?" asked Lady Ella and Mary.

"About twenty-five millions," replied the Professor.

"Twenty-five millions!" exclaimed both ladies together.

"Will you not tell us, Professor," asked Ethel, "how all the surprising changes you refer to were brought about? There must be some cause. It would be so interesting to hear its nature. Must all nations pass—like human beings—through the several stages of birth, growth, decay, and finally end in death?"

The question was profound, and plumbed the depths of the Professor's philosophy. We joined in Ethel's request. Even Lord Heathfield urged it; said it would be deeply interesting and instructive to learn how England had descended from her former greatness to her present condition.

To these united requests Professor Fowler gave a hearty assent, but would require a day or so to look up references and put his thoughts together.

"Oh, I will help you with your references, if I may," exclaimed Ethel. "I am getting fond of antiquarian researches. It is so interesting to look upon old things."

"So long as they are *things*; human beings are pleasantest when they are young," remarked the Professor, in a vein of gallantry. "Yes, Ethel, you shall help me, if you will, and we will begin at once." A slight blush suffused Ethel's pretty face.

"In a couple of days I shall hope to be prepared with my lecture, if I may call it by such a name."

On the day agreed upon we met at Lord Heathfield's to hear the Professor's lecture. His lordship had invited (with the lecturer's consent) a few other friends. For the information of these, Professor Fowler again opened his atlas, and pointed out the several places of interest which he had identified, repeating the information he had already given on the previous occasion.

"The hill known as Palace Hill," he added, "was so named from a vast structure called the Crystal Palace, built in the century of which I purpose to speak more particularly. The plain beyond, from which our friends the wolves came, must be near old Croydon, which contained a palace of the Archbishop of Canterbury; and here," he continued, "ran a railway, the Brighton and South Coast; that artificial cutting which we observed on the occasion of our visit must be some of the remains."

CHAPTER X.

THE CAUSES OF ENGLAND'S DECLINE.

"I HAVE said that I would deliver a lecture, but I hope you will understand that I do not purpose undertaking anything so serious or presumptuous; I hope that all present will regard my talk as only part of a serious conversation, in which, with your consent, I purpose taking the lead—that is all."

To this we agreed, and Professor Fowler continued:

"Ethel, the other evening, gave expression to an opinion which was commonly held in past times as explanatory of the decay of nations—that nations, like human beings, pass through the several stages of birth, growth, and decay, ending in death. I hope, my dear Ethel, you will allow me to say that the analogy is very misleading. Man is born, grows, decays and dies, of necessity; nations do not—they may rise again, as Greece and Syria have done."

"And man, too, rises again," interrupted Ethel.

"Yes, in another sphere, under wholly different conditions. So far as this life is concerned, and the conditions of this life, death closes his career. But a nation may rearise, and become prosperous under the same conditions amid which she formerly lived. Nor is there any necessity that a nation should die, if these conditions continue to exist and to be observed."

"The case of China is evidence of this. Here is a nation that is as powerful to-day as it was four thousand years ago."

"May not that be due," Lord Heathfield remarked, "to her feeble vitality, which does not make heavy demands upon the national life?"

"I think not; and I hope to prove that a nation, any nation, may remain vigorous and prosperous if she observes the conditions under which prosperity obtains. The conditions are:—Soil and climate, which are usually stable; the character of its people, which is largely the effect of both; its form of government, which again is an outcome of the people's character; its defensive power, which may be due to either its position, or the number and courage of its people; and economic laws—those laws which regulate the interchange of commodities; or to speak more exactly, the creation and the distribution of wealth. Where these conditions obtain, a nation prospers; where any one of them fails, the nation decays. They all existed in a high degree in this country in the century under review. Many of them still exist here. The soil of England is extremely fertile, and produces abundantly; the character of its people is of the same solid kind that it was in old times; the people are moral and religious. The Teutonic or Saxon race was always, even in the days of Tacitus, the Roman historian, noted for the possession of its moral qualities, which lie at the root of the domestic life, the cradle of the nation."

This sentiment met with an emphatic approval from the Professor's audience.

"And its people are," he continued, "a law-abiding people, which is, again, a characteristic of the Teutonic nature, and fond of representative institutions. England is protected by her position from the attacks of her enemies;

The sea is still her defence, as of old. Now, in all these things the England of to-day is the same as the England of the nineteenth century. We must seek, therefore, in the two remaining conditions of prosperity—climate and economic laws—for the explanation of the changes that we see. The climate of England has changed. A thousand years ago it was ten to fifteen degrees warmer than it is to-day."

This opinion evoked exclamations of surprise and many inquiries—

"How can that be? The climate can't have changed."

"I can assure you that it has; and to the full extent that I have mentioned."

"But how?" asked Mary.

"I will try to explain. The Gulf Stream, which, as you are aware, is an extended belt of warm water, running like a river across the Atlantic, and passing in part through the Panama Canal into the Pacific Ocean, had a thousand years ago a different course. Before that canal was made the warm stream impinged upon the shores of America, and was thus diverted from its course, and impelled towards the north; passing through the Gulf of Florida it rushed on, with hardly diminished speed, up the coast of America, imparting some of its heat to the eastern shores of that continent; advancing still further north, it struck the coast of Newfoundland, and was headed, so to speak, into a south-easterly direction, branching at the Azores, one branch flowing towards the British Islands and northern Europe at a reduced speed, yet still carrying a considerable amount of warmth in its bosom, which it imparted to Great Britain and Ireland, raising their tem-

perature some ten or fifteen degrees, giving them a temperate climate, one of the conditions of prosperity. Instead of having a seven months winter—('Some times longer,' said Lady Ella)—England then had a four months' winter, and of course the winter was much less severe. You can judge of its character when I tell you that sometimes the trees were in leaf in April. England had never a fine climate when compared with Australia; but in those days it was a good climate. But this change, great as it undoubtedly was, does not give the whole reason for the decay of England. Other causes contributed materially to it. Parts of Canada are as cold as Great Britain, and yet Canada has a large population and is fairly prosperous.

"England, in the nineteenth century, was characterised by the existence of immense wealth, in the hands of the few, and awful and squalid poverty the lot of the many. There existed also an intense sympathy with human suffering, the out-growth of Christianity. These facts gave birth to earnest and continuous efforts to diminish the pressure of poverty, and to improve the lot of the suffering. So far, so well. The movement was right in its aims, but wrong in its methods. Had it been wisely directed, and become successful, England would, despite the increasing cold, have continued great and prosperous—would have led the van in the march of progress. Unhappily the movement was not wisely directed. People who had a smattering of knowledge, but who were filled with human sympathies, caught at any plausible theories which seemed likely to give immediate relief, and embraced them and urged their adoption upon their fellow countrymen. They were such theories as were known by the names of

protection, socialism, communism; terms which I need not now explain. In one word, they were of an artificial character, and tended unduly to the restriction of individual freedom, which is one of the chief factors of progress.

"These ideas were in the air. The people generally thought that if they could only be embodied in legislation, all evil would cease. They were easily imposed upon by specious arguments."

"That's the danger of a democracy; government—well ordered government, becomes impossible in a democracy," said Lord Heathfield.

"I am not prepared to admit that," replied Professor Fowler, "for Australia is a democracy; but education should accompany, if not precede, the possession of political power. If this is the case, then the institutions of a country rest not only on the broad base of a people's will, but on the broad base of an educated people's will, which makes all the difference. It cannot be said that the privileged classes of that day did their duty. Some of them did, but many of them were conspicuously indifferent to the welfare and claims of their fellow-creatures. The character of the nation deteriorated through various causes. Religious belief was too often of an otiose character. In many cases the great facts of religion were scornfully rejected. One of the great statesmen of the age said that the lower classes had ceased to believe in, and the upper classes to practise, Christianity. My own studies have led me to reverse and vary the epigram. The upper classes had ceased to believe in Christianity, and neither the upper nor the lower practised it. But this statement must be accepted with a very large grain of salt.

The institutions of religion flourished, and numbers of people in all classes, especially of the lower classes, were fervently religious. Still it was an age of scornful irreligion. Laxity of morals followed. Women, even publicly, strove to break down the barriers with which the wisdom of ages had protected the sanctity of the marriage relation, and to sweep away, as far as might be, the distinctions of sex. All the foundations were out of course. Grinding poverty urged men on to demand change, for change's sake, in hope that something to the advantage of the poverty-stricken might turn up. Lawlessness was organised into a creed, ignorance triumphed, and the wildest economic theories were accepted and enforced. These things operating with the climatic changes, slowly following the diversion of the Gulf Stream, gradually destroyed the commerce of England. Its people emigrated by hundreds of thousands every year; population was at a standstill, and then began steadily to decline. All who loved freedom fled away, and founded new empires of the British blood in Canada, Africa, Australia. It took centuries fully to manifest the blighting and destructive influence of the bad economic laws that were adopted and enforced. But time effectually revealed their true character, and England slowly decayed, and ceased to be a nation among the nations of the earth. I regret that facts compel me to utter truths that must be unpleasant to the ears of our kind friends. Yet they will, I am sure, pardon me."

We had all listened with deep interest, and now proceeded to ask questions and to offer opinions. The change indicated had not been accomplished without much

suffering, injustice, and bloodshed. This fact had been lightly touched upon in the Professor's lecture.

"Thank you, very much, Professor Fowler," said our noble host, "for your most admirable exposition of our past history. I shall value more highly than ever the institutions under which we now live. It would be an interesting appendix to your lecture to tell the story of our recovery from that awful lapse. We will hope for this some other day. We are now, I trust, on the high road to renewed prosperity, and the resuscitation of a great nation. And now," he said, turning to Miss Marsten, "let us wash the taste of these unpleasant truths out of our mouths, and have some music. Will you oblige us, Miss Marsten?"

To this request Miss Marsten most pleasantly responded, and took her place at the piano. The piece selected by her was called "The Sibyl's Curse." It began in a low, soft, crooning way, as if the sibyl was gathering strength for her awful utterance. Presently, when the spirit of divination fell upon her, the notes of the instrument crashed and wailed, rising to an awful shriek. The movement was repeated with variations, and then the music died away in a low melancholy wail, after which came the song of the sibyl.

As I listened to the music and watched the player's face and its varying expression, I could imagine her a prophetess of ancient time, informed and animated by some divine spirit, foretelling coming doom. The subject was a congenial closing to the Professor's lecture. Other music and conversation followed, and then our pleasant evening came to an end.

"Good-night, Margaret." I said to Miss Marston, when we parted for the night. "Thank you for your weird song and its speaking accompaniment."

"I am so glad you liked it, for it is my own." And my hand lingered in hers as we parted.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WITCH'S CAVERN: THE VISIONS.

That night was fine, and a bright half-moon filled the heavens with her soft light. My mind was strangely excited, and I did not go to bed, but, throwing open the bedroom window, sat thinking, occasionally looking out upon the scene below and beyond. I was in London—the London which once filled the eye of the world, whose roads lay beneath my very feet. I thought of the story we had just heard, and wondered if it could be true. Again I looked out of my window, this time extending my view across the river, and looking upon the forest on the opposite shore. There was also a forest on this side of the river, about half a mile from the hotel. Something impelled me to visit it; the walk would dissipate my excitement and cool my fevered imagination. So I descended into the street, and turned my steps in the direction of Belgrave Forest. After walking for some time, I resolved to return (it was just twelve o'clock), and turned my steps homeward. I had hardly done so when I saw a small hare, perfectly white, running before

me. Struck by the unusual appearance, I stopped; immediately the hare stopped, and raised itself on its hind feet. It continued to grow and expand itself till it seemed four or five feet high! I broke out into a cold perspiration, and felt my very hair rising on end. It was as if a spirit stood before me. Turning its course, the *thing* moved on slowly. I felt constrained to follow. Whenever I stopped it stopped, and made me understand that I was to follow. This idea came upon me instinctively. Slowly it thus led me into the recesses of the small forest. I was in a long avenue of elms, whose leaves were well developed, and whose branches met overhead and dimmed the light of the moon. On reaching the middle of the avenue *it* waited for a moment, and then turned into a recess. I followed, and found myself before the mouth of a small cave or cavern. Under its shadow stood a woman—a beautiful woman—whose raven hair veiled the beauty of her face, which was still further hidden by the graceful folds of some soft, dark material, lightly wrapped round her head, yet not so closely but that I could see the expression of her lovely face, which was thoughtful and melancholy.

"You have done well in coming," she said, in a low, sweet voice; "I have much to show you. Come!" she continued, taking my hand.

Without reluctance I gave myself up to her guidance. She led me through the windings of the cave, into which the light of the moon faintly struggled, until we stood on the banks of the river, which rolled sluggishly by at our feet and rippled softly in the moonlight. All this time the mysterious guide held my hand.

"Look!" she exclaimed, pressing it.

I looked, and a mighty city rose before me. A mighty city! I had never imagined anything so vast. I had read of ancient Babylon, of Old London; but had never realised what their vastness meant. The city seemed interminable. It was as if the whole country had been turned into bricks and mortar; it was a forest of houses; and once in it, it would be impossible to find one's way out. Its vastness was appalling! After the first sense of surprise was over, I began to observe more closely the character of the houses. Many of them were large and well-built, and adorned without regard to cost. Elegantly and expensively dressed men and women came from them. Behind these, almost abutting upon them, were houses of mean appearance—huts, hovels, dens, unfit for human habitation; yet they were crowded with people—poor, sickly, underfed; children crawled in the courts and filled the narrow alleys. I looked upon them with wonder, uncared for and neglected; they were miserably clad, half starved, and bore marks of ill-treatment and violent usage upon their bodies. One little girl, six years old, was looking out of a dirty window in one of the hovels. The window panes were broken and stopped in places with brown paper; through the openings the cold wind whistled, while the snow (for it was snowing) fell. The child looked at me and cried for help. Her poor wan face told a tale of cruelty and suffering. Her low wail smote upon my ear, and then it seemed as though I had become all ear; I heard a mighty wail from thousands of children's voices borne in upon me. But presently the wail was drowned by a loud roar, which filled the whole sphere of sound. This was the roar of the streets; for

the streets were crowded with people, some well dressed, most of them badly clad. They hurried hither and thither in great haste; and as their footsteps smote upon the pavement the air was filled with a roar of sound. In the middle of the streets were long, lumbering vehicles, and these also were filled with people. Strange and cruel scenes, which I thought had gone from the world for ever, passed before me as I gazed. A vast crowd of people was collected in one place. It was a jeering, ragged crowd, and many were running to join it. In the midst of it were two men, naked and bleeding; around them, in the foreground, were many well-dressed men, who took the keenest interest in the sight. The two men were fighting as if for dear life, with fierce vindictive looks, while those around encouraged them by shouts and laughter to greater ferocity. Many of the sightseers had books in their hands, in which they noted down bets that were freely made by their companions. I felt sickened at the sight, and turned away my eyes to look at other scenes. Here and there I saw gentle and kindly faces, men and women moving among the crowded alleys, offering a kind word, a little relief, to the wretched inhabitants. But they were a mere handful in number. The great majority were intent upon their own interests, their own pleasures. I had seen enough. Was there no end to this vast city and its miseries? My guide relaxed her pressure upon my hand, and the city passed.

I was standing upon the bank of the Thames, the trees soughing over my head. I took a long breath, and looked at my guide. Her face was calm and immovable as a statue.

* * * *

Again she tightened her grasp upon my hand, and I was standing upon a vast prairie; rather, let me say, a boundless plain, illimitable, except for the far-off horizon. A hot fierce sun poured down its rays upon the plain. I took this in at a glance, for my eye rested not upon the plain, but upon a living stream, whose breadth I could not measure, which flowed ceaselessly across it. It came from the rising of the sun, and streamed on towards its setting. On, on, on, it moved, without breaking rank or pausing. As I examined it more closely, I saw that it was composed of every kind of creature known and unknown: the huge elephant in gay trappings, the tall giraffe, the proud lion, the cruel tiger, the fierce wolf; nor these only, but domestic animals of every kind: the noble cart-horse, the handsome thoroughbred, dogs of every variety, and domestic fowl; while overhead soared the bird of prey—the fierce eagle and the obscene vulture. Here, too, were loathsome reptiles: the huge constrictor, the poisonous snake, hissing and writhing. In the midst were men and women, who marched on harmless beside their strange companions; stranger still, vast numbers of little children, some held tenderly by the hand of their mother, others running in and out among the motley throng. I had heard of prairie fires, and the strange companionships which follow in the attempt to escape from its devouring flames, but there was no fire here, only a constant and hurrying movement of life, on, ever on, towards the setting sun. As I looked more closely, I observed that many of those composing the great multitude—the great majority of them were thin and weary, and that there was often an almost human look in the eye. They sometimes looked

on eagerly and anxiously towards the west, or up towards the sun, as if help and relief were expected. For there was in all a sense of weariness, except in the case of the little children. And yet they never rested; the pressure from behind drove on those that were before. As the general scene became more familiar to my eyes, I began to take notice of particular incidents. The men and women were grave and serious in manner, as if they were responsible for the movement of the surging throng of life surrounding them. The children played about without fear, and yet the stately march was not without incidents of danger. For I now began to notice that the cruel tiger was here, as elsewhere, cruel and bloodthirsty; that he tore his victims limb from limb, and marched on crunching his bones, while the blood dripped from his mouth; that the huge constrictor coiled himself suddenly round a fine horse or ox, and despite its struggles and cries crushed it to death; that the fangs of the poisonous serpent smote suddenly, and left a swollen corpse to be trodden under foot; that the eagle swooped down upon the frisking lamb, and tore out its eyes before its dam. These things and such things occurred every moment; and yet the ranks were unbroken and the march unimpeded even for a moment. But the children seemed to bear a charmed life. Some disappeared, but others immediately took their place, as full of glee as were their predecessors. I watched more closely, and became conscious of exceptions to this. A wolf with cruel fangs seized a little child as it danced by, and tore it to pieces, growling fiercely. Immediately there was an angry howl and cry from those near at hand, which did not for a moment

interrupt the onward march, and the wolf was torn limb from limb. From this scene of horror my attention was drawn to another of a different and even more awful character. I saw a beautifully marked snake writhe up to a lovely child and attract her attention. The child put out her hand and played with the neck of the serpent, whose baleful eyes were fixed intently upon her face. The child drew closer and closer to the serpent, when, in a moment, the deadly blow was struck at the child's breast, and I expected to see her fall dead. She shuddered visibly, but kept on caressing the cruel serpent with her hand, sometimes laying its head in her bosom. And now I beheld a new horror. She began to change in outward form, each moment becoming more and more like the serpent by her side, and in an incredibly short space of time another serpent writhed in the throng. I was horror-stricken. And now I saw other metamorphoses of like character taking place. A wolf played with a child, the child returned the wolf's caresses; occasionally its companion snapped and snarled, but the child still continued its companionship. Gradually its outward form changed, and wolf-like it trotted beside or snarled and fought with its companion. A new light began to dawn upon me. The almost human look of each member of the varied crowd was explained by what I had seen. The crowd was the arena of many strange, cruel dramas. When would it come to an end? It moved on, ever with its face towards the setting sun, its mighty tramp making the earth tremble and filling the air with sound. It had come from the rising of the sun and would not cease at its going down. The sight was inexpressibly pitiful and wearying. The mind longed for rest.

At this point the hand that held mine so firmly relaxed its hold, and the scene faded away, giving place to the soft moonlight reflected in the passive water. . . . .

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Again the hand closed on mine, and I stood by a great river, whose broad-darkened waters rolled at my feet. But it was not the Thames that I looked upon; high mountains enclosed the slowly-moving mass; precipices, jagged and rugged, frowned over the river. Beyond, other mountains, bare at the base and clothed with stunted trees at their tops. Beyond these, again, inaccessible heights, whose snowy tops glistened and shimmered. Everywhere this triple battlement, except in one direction to my right, where a dark valley opened as a gate to the river's brink. Not a sound broke the death-like stillness which brooded over the scene; the water rolled on between its rocky barriers, smooth and gliding; a strange, loathsome smell, whose effect was sickening, rose from it, and drove me from the brink. As I wondered at the effect thus produced upon me, there was a rush of wild beasts from the dark valley to the right; they came on in wild career, tossing their heads in the air, to the brink of the river. Putting their noses to the stream and smelling, they threw up their heads and bellowed; again they sniffed the river, and again threw their noses into the air and drew back, pawing the ground with their feet, bellowing and roaring like mad creatures. While I wondered at this sight they, lashing themselves with their tails, disappeared into the dark valley. Scarcely had they gone when a wind arose and ruffled the surface of the water,

which began to moan and sigh, as if it were alive and in pain. The cry was weird, and almost human. The wind increased in force and volume, and then great waves rose and rushed and roared. But above the cry of the tossing waves I heard a piercing shriek, as of a human voice. Looking in the direction from which the cry came, I was appalled to see a human hand tossing in the red waves—which shone like crimson—bright red waves! They rolled over the human hand, and stilled for ever the human cry. And now, at my feet, the body of a woman, with a child folded to her breast, rolled into the shore. Her gaping throat looked horrible, and the child's heart was exposed to view. The return of the wave cast them again into the deep. The wind howled furiously, and, dashing the waves mountains high against one another, cast up a crimson spray into the air. As I stood watching the horrible and fascinating sight, the wind caught the light spray and drenched me as I stood. Ugh, the sickening smell! the crimson drops—blood! blood! It was a river of blood. My face was blanched with terror. My heart stood still, and I should have fallen, but that the sibyl's hold relaxed, and the scene faded away. . . .

* * * *

I drew a sigh of relief, and would have turned away, but that again her hand closed over mine; and again I stood by a stream; but how unlike the former! The shores were low-lying. Trees grew here and there along the margin, stunted and blasted. The river sparkled and leapt as it rushed on in its bed, hissing and roaring in its course. Its surface was illuminated with rich, soft light; above

it hung a lurid atmosphere. Birds, uttering low sad cries, flew over it and around it, and fell from time to time into its depths to rise no more. The air became sultry and stifling, and the perspiration broke out all over me. I drew back a little from its banks, and listened to the rush of the river, hissing and roaring as it went by. Presently the trees on its margin burst into flames; the whole place was on fire, which burnt fiercely in its rocky bed, and consumed earth and stone and air. The air was alive with fire, and I could endure no more . . . .

The sibyl released my hand, and I was standing in the cave, where the trees met over my head, through whose branches the moonbeams fell upon me. The awful scenes were gone. They were mere phantasmagoria, nothing more. Thank God for that!

"You have gone through much," said the sibyl, "but more is to come. Here," she continued, drawing a ring from her finger, "is a potent charm. Wear it upon your hand, and you are safe." As she said this she placed the ring, a plain ring, with a small plain stone in it, on a finger of my left hand. "You need rest, for the heavy task that lies before you. Drink this, and you will be refreshed."

She placed a small glass to my lips, the contents of which I drank, without hesitation or question, and immediately sank down into an unconscious sleep. . . . . .

CHAPTER XII.

THE METAMORPHOSIS: LONDON BRIDGE.

How long I slept I know not. But when I awoke the forest had disappeared, and with it the sibyl's cave. The air was full of unusual and strange sounds. I was standing upon a narrow bridge, spanning a muddy river some 200 or 300 yards wide, whose banks on either side were hidden by numerous houses, reaching as far as the eye could see. The surface of the river was almost covered by a number of small flat boats as dirty-looking as itself. Here and there were narrow vessels of larger size, from whose small boilers steam was puffing and shrieking. They were crowded with people in peculiar costumes. The bridge, too, on which I stood was thronged with people in similar dresses—gloomy-looking, dirty dresses. Many of the throng were hurrying rapidly over the bridge—some in one direction, some in another. In the middle of the bridge were strange-looking, lumbering coaches, each drawn by two horses, and filled with passengers. Numbers of the people on the bridge were standing still, leaning against its parapets, looking into the water, or watching the small steamers. About a quarter of a mile distant was another bridge, and over this dark-looking carriages, linked together, were passing, impelled by an engine, from which clouds of steam rose; indeed, the whole atmosphere was darkened by the smoke, while now and then screams from these steam-drawn vessels filled the air. It was a busy scene that I looked upon, but in-

expressibly saddening. The human beings—God's highest handiwork on earth—did not seem to consider that cleanliness and neatness and beauty were demanded of them. Only here and there did the eye look upon an appearance that awakened a sense of pleasure. The great mass were hurrying through life without regard to those personal attentions which the high importance of human life demands.

I was too intent upon the facts which surrounded me so strangely to consider for a moment how mysterious was their sudden advent. As people passed by I overheard scraps of conversation, and thus learnt that the language of this strange people was English—but English of a kind which antiquarian students call provincial. Anxious to obtain an explanation of the strange scene, I addressed myself to one who was passing in a more leisurely way than most of the passengers.

"Excuse me, sir; will you kindly tell me the name of this river?" pointing to the muddy water below the bridge.

"The Thames," he answered shortly, looking upon me with surprise.

"And this bridge?" I continued.

"London Bridge," in a more surprised tone.

I bowed, and sweeping my hand in the direction of the numerous buildings on either side of the river, said:

"Kindly tell me the name of this place."

"This," he exclaimed, shortly and suspiciously, moving off, "this is London!" and was gone.

"London!" "The Thames!" "London Bridge!" I almost laughed aloud at the strange trick that had been

played upon me. I was actually in the Old London of Professor Fowler's antiquarian researches. As I thought of this strange metamorphosis, I felt a profound change passing, not over me, but within me. The old memories that had been stirring within me like shadows began to take shape and substance. Isolated recollections became linked through the rush of other memories, and my inward consciousness of another era became vital and vivid. *I was in the nineteenth century*, and not in the thirtieth! Was the contention of metaphysicians—that there was no such thing as time, that past, present, and future were merely modes of existence—true after all? The experiences of 2900 were gone; those of 1800 were present. The story of the Australian Republic in the year of 2990 had already receded into the dim distance. The nineteenth century, with its restless, active life, had taken its place in my consciousness, and lay in the foreground of my mental picture; yet I still retained a faint sense, becoming momentarily more and more dim, of that future time. The nineteenth century was the foreground; the Australian Republic was thrown by the perspective into the far distance. My full self now awoke within me. I recollected my home down in Devonshire, the garden of England; I recalled with grief the recent death of my dear mother, following that of my father some three years earlier; my only sister married and settled in Australia; my school-days at Winchester; my Cambridge course; the taking of my degree; and my coming out in honours (second class). My mind was busy with these recollections.

As all these thoughts resumed their sway in my consciousness and drove out my Australian experiences, they

made me another than William Furley. While I was thinking dreamily about my new self, moving on slowly as a man in a dream, I was aroused by a touch on the shoulder, and a voice in my ear, which I instantly recognised.

"Hillo, Graham! You here? What are you doing in London?"

Fred Burton stood before me. Yes; the veritable Fred—the friend of my school and college days. After mutual greetings, which were cordial and hearty, I noticed that he was dressed like a priest, even to the hard felt hat, corded and tasselled and pleated collar.

"What's the meaning of this, Fred? You've not turned Roman?"

"By no means," he answered; "I am a Catholic priest in what you Protestants call the Church of England; in what we good Catholics call the Catholic Church in England."

"You were a Protestant when you were at college, old man, or your reverence—which is it to be?"

"Hang the reverence, old boy, for the nonce. Yes, I *was* a Protestant; but I have seen the error of my ways. After you left Cambridge I resolved to study for orders, as the phrase is; and so after taking my degree—only a pass, Bill—I went into a Theolog, and there got enlightenment, and eschewed my evil ways, amongst which was my Protestant heresy. But come along. You have only just come to London; you'll want to see all that's to be seen, but first you'll want lodging and food. I am working in an East-end parish, with a most devout fellow—Father Feilding. He has four curates, and we all live together,

in the clergy-house, like one family; but I've no doubt that I can give you house-room for a day or two; the vicar's most kind, and will be pleased with the prospect of a convert."

Thus merrily talking, like the Fred of old, Burton hurried me on through the crowded streets of London, in the direction of the East-end.

On arriving at the clergy-house I was introduced to the vicar, the Rev. W. J. Feilding, commonly called Father Feilding. He was a silent man, of grave manners. But his silence did not give me the idea of reserve; rather it suggested thoughtfulness. The kindly smile, when he did smile, dispelled the least notion of reserve. His silence was preoccupation. I was at home at once, and gladly consented to trespass for two or three days on Burton's hospitality. At two o'clock lunch I met several of the clergy—one, a Mr. Williamson, a lithe-looking little man, with what children call "cross-eyes," or a squint. He was dressed *à la mode*, ritualistically considered, that is, he wore a sort of clerical poncho, which gave him the appearance of a monk of old times. The other members of the party were adorned in ecclesiastical costumes of the most advanced type; the immediate spectacular effect of which was to remove them from the sphere of ordinary human beings. Yet they were all, except the meditative vicar, who sat silent, human enough; they ate and drank (beer) and talked; the cross-eyed brother, by no means cross-grained, keeping up a lively chatter; so I soon felt quite at my ease. Shortly after we had begun our meal a tall, dark, heavy-looking man, of handsome

appearance entered the room, and took his seat at the table.

"We could not wait, Dunstan," said Williamson; "'punctuality is the politeness of priests.' What will you take? Try some beer; you look tired."

"Yes, I'm awfully done up. I've had a whole morning of it. Those women have always such a lot to tell one," replied Dunstan.

"You didn't receive confessions, did you? I thought you were only to give them a homily?"

"They wouldn't let me off with that; I had to improvise a confession; and here I am, an hour late."

"Of course the divine sister made her confession?" said Williamson, with a mischievous glance.

To this Dunstan made no reply, but began his lunch, after crossing himself and saying a few words in Latin, during the saying of which there was a moment's silence on the part of the others at the table. Dunstan had no sooner taken his seat than Williamson returned to the charge about the divine sister. The joke, for such it seemed to be, amused the younger members of the party immensely, but did not elicit any response from the subject of it other than a rapid side glance in my direction, which led to my introduction to the reverend missioner and confessor. I had often heard of him, and had formed quite other notions of him. He was a great preacher, and an author of ecclesiastical history. He was also a writer of hymns, some of which he had himself set to music. I could see for myself that he was handsome, and suspected that he knew it. I was not surprised to learn from Burton, as well as from the merry badinage of the luncheon party,

that the ladies doted on him. I did not like him. There was something in the furtive glance of his eyes which suggested distrust. When in my room upstairs, Burton joined me for a smoke, and asked me what I thought of his friends. My opinion, especially of the vicar, pleased him. In regard to Dunstan, I gathered that he shared my own sentiments, for he said:

"I don't care for him, myself; but he is a dear good fellow, and I know the fault is my own. You see he's reserved, and I'm not a bit, so that makes a world of difference. But the women run after him—he must be sympathetic, and he's such a handsome fellow."

Later in the day I had a long talk with the good vicar, and realised the cause of his grave and thoughtful manner. In reply to my question, "How do you get hold of the masses around you?" he said:

"Not very well yet. They are slow to learn; they have so much to unlearn, and Protestant prejudice is great. I've been working among them for ten years, and the results are discouraging. If it were not for our kind friends from other parts of London, they would be more unsatisfactory still. English independence or individuality is strong; but faithful work, with the Divine blessing, must succeed—must succeed," he repeated.

"May it not be, sir," I suggested, "that your methods are not suited to the genius of the Teutonic nature? The confessional, for instance: will English people ever accept that?"

"Why not?" he replied. "They did accept it once, for England was once Catholic, and she is still religious. In

the days of King John she was the most Catholic nation in Europe, and why should she not be so again?"

I thought his illustration was rather a bad one, for I had read English history differently, and would certainly not regard the England of John as a type to be desired. But "clerical history" is, I have learned, vastly different from that which is in favour with secular people. However, I did not reply to the vicar's remark, for the fact to which it referred seemed to cheer him in his almost hopeless task.

The next day was Sunday, and there were two or three "early celebrations," or administrations of the Holy Communion. The methods at these services were all new to me, nor did I like them. However, I attended the eleven o'clock service, and found the church well filled with respectably dressed people, who seemed to enjoy a service that was certainly not the service of the prayer book. It is too well known to need description here. The Rev. Wilfrid Dunstan preached an eloquent sermon, without notes, and appeared at his best when addressing, in earnest tones, the large audience. I was surprised, not at the number of the people, but at their fashionable attire, and remarked upon the fact to Burton.

"Oh," he replied, "most of them come from the West-end, and other parts of London. They come, like good Catholics, to uphold the hands of the faithful priest in his arduous labours. We shouldn't be able to get along without them. They find the sinews of war, my boy, and help us in a variety of ways. They also make our work popular in West-end drawing-rooms. What did you think of the Rev. Wilfrid's sermon? It was fine, wasn't it?"

With this opinion I agreed; yet I did not like the Rev. Wilfrid Dunstan, whose reserve, by the way, completely disappeared at dinner time.

On Tuesday morning Burton showed me a letter he had received from the editor of the *London Express*, which had reference to myself, and explained that he had written to him on Saturday with respect to me.

"It was only the day before I met you that I was dining with him, and he asked me if I knew a man who would suit him as assistant editor. Directly I met you in London I knew you were the man, for you always had journalistic proclivities, even as an undergrad. Here is his reply."

Shortly, the editor would see me at two o'clock that day, and if I was a likely man, he would be glad of my services in the capacity of assistant editor of the *London Express*. I was much touched at Fred's thoughtful kindness, and expressed my gratitude.

"Never mind, old man, you'll be able to repay me by inserting paragraphs, in which the 'able and eloquent Fred Burton, late of St. Catherine's Hall, Cambridge,' will make a frequent appearance."

I interviewed the editor at the hour named, and was offered and accepted the position of assistant editor, and thus became a London journalist in the close of the nineteenth century, and began my experience of London life.

CHAPTER XIII.

A DINNER PARTY: THE POOR AND THEIR VICES.

I BEGAN my work on the *London Express* without loss of time. Part of the duties that fell to me as one of the assistant editors of the *London Express* was to act as "buffer" between the editor and persons desirous of "seeing the editor"—a rather numerous class. There were some people who were admitted to that high honour, but usually he was fenced off from the profane vulgar by numerous ingenious devices, as well as by the blunt, "Editor's busy," or the veracious, "Editor's not in." Of those who were privileged to have personal access to the editor's sanctum were politicians and people in society who wished to be on personal terms with one who could paragraph them or put them into a leading article. This privilege was also at times accorded to men of wealth, who were interested in speculative concerns; but, as a rule, this class was treated with a courteous reserve, and did not get beyond the assistant editor; who was also the medium of communication between those who had information to communicate and the great public who read the paper. The number of people who were anxious to assist me in my editorial duties was large. Letters, received every day, containing valuable information, often already packed up in neat telling paragraphic form, were numerous. Usually the persons contributing them were directly or remotely interested in the information which they kindly forwarded in the interests of the public. Strange, the

devouring appetite for publicity which affects the children of the nineteenth century! Strange, that a paragraph which nobody reads except the writer and the sender should be the highest aim of thousands! To see themselves or their surroundings in print! I learnt much during my position as assistant editor of the *London Express*, and strove to perfect myself in my duties. Occasionally I wrote one of the leading articles in the paper, and had the honour of hearing my contribution discussed in public.

So soon as I had settled down to my work, I found lodgings in Westminster, that I might be near the scene of my nightly labours. There I was fortunate enough to make the acquaintance of a family whose members, or some of them, will play an important part in this story. Mr. Benson was a barrister of good standing and some wealth. He was also a member of Parliament. His wife, a woman of nearly forty-five, was one of the sweetest natured women I ever met. She was even now extremely pretty, and must have been lovely in her youth. She had four children, the two eldest of whom were boys at school; the two younger, girls, Margaret, about eight, and Sybil, six years old. They had caught something of their mother's beauty. I met Mrs. Benson and her husband first at a dinner-party in Grosvenor Place. But two or three sentences are needed by way of preface to the conversation I am about to relate.

The *London Express* threw open its columns, from time to time, for the discussion of various social questions. At one time it was the condition of the poor seamstress that was discussed, and communications from the class referred to were invited. Many letters of a most piteous character

reached us, and some were published. They told of respectable women able, by twelve, fourteen, even sixteen hours' continuous labour with their needle, to obtain the bare necessaries of life! Five shillings a week; sometimes a little more! Out of this pittance two shillings went for the rent of a solitary room, which served for all the purposes of life: cooking, which meant the occasional boiling of some water for a cup of tea; working, and sleeping. We did all we could to verify the tales that these letters made public, and I regret to say that they were substantially true. Such was the pressure of competition. Then came indignant remonstrances from aggrieved housekeepers, whose consciences had been touched by this revelation of suffering, stating that they were willing to pay five, six, or seven shillings a week, and find food, for good servants that were not to be had. What need, therefore, for the poor seamstress to wear out her life in her solitary room?

This correspondence was followed shortly after, being the slack season, by another on marriage. Is it a failure? The subject was a large one; but most of the correspondents took the adverse side, and maintained, on various grounds, that marriage was a failure. The majority of the writers of the letters were women; some of them single women! I, of course, did not know, or, to speak more correctly, did not always know, who the writers were, but the letters passed through my hands, and I saw that they were usually written in a feminine style.

The reasons assigned for these diverse opinions were often of a singular character. The soul of the husband

did not respond to the aspirations of the wife. The wife did not advance with the husband's advancement in life; she was a mere housekeeper, while he had brains enough for a Lord Chancellor. Marriage, wrote one lady, was a relic of barbarism—a survival from the time when a wife was one of the chattels of the rich and powerful. It was a symbol of subjection, a badge of slavery. Another sentimental lady thought that the love of one man tended to cramp and restrain that divine spirit which should expand itself, and realise its native divinity by embracing many. Again, another wrote that woman could never take her right place in the world until she was man's declared equal, taking her place by his side on the platform, in the forum, in Parliament. That if she were married, there might be occasions, delicately underlined, when she would be secluded, and precluded from the discharge of her womanly duties. That such periods of seclusion degraded woman to the level of the beast! Another, a man who shortly after deserted the patient mother of his five children, was very strong upon the necessity of soul meeting soul, and of marriages being arranged in heaven in the presence of God's angels, in order that they might be eternal!

This correspondence revealed a curious state of society in its inward life; for the writers were, so far as we knew, respectable people. It showed, too, how far removed we were from that primitive state when men and women married "for better, for worse;" for every correspondent evidently thought that the existence of "incompatibilities" was a sufficient reason for forthwith dissolving the marriage relation.

While the correspondence was in progress, I was invited to a dinner party in Grosvenor Place. The host was a leading politician, and I suspect I was asked at the suggestion of the editor, as he could not himself attend, and my presence would at least secure a paragraph in the *London Express*. The invitation was accepted; and the evening named found me a guest at the table of Lord and Lady Hopfield. I need not say that there was every seasonable delicacy; that the wines (which I did not touch) were of the most expensive kind. The rooms were well lighted, and looked magnificent. The guests were distinguished, and the dresses of the ladies resplendent; half a dozen well-kept and well-fed servants waited at table; and everything went off to the satisfaction of Lady Hopfield and her hospitable husband. After the first glass of wine, the guests began to feel more at home with each other, and conversation became natural and free, sometimes general. One of the subjects discussed was the prospective condition of the poor during the hard winter that was anticipated.

"It is very sad," said our hostess; "but I fear a good deal of their poverty is due to their want of thought."

"Yes," said a lady dressed in an expensive light blue silk, which, with trimming, must have cost the lady's husband at least a hundred pounds; "yes, do you know, Lady Hopfield, I was recently told of a case where a poor family were actually burning their boots to boil a kettle of water, as if they could not have drunk cold water. Such extravagance!"

"I have known a similar case," said a clergyman sitting opposite me, the Rev. Arthur Grately. "The poor

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things had no fire, nor any means of making one, nor had they anything to eat in the house. All they had was a little tea and sugar; so, to relieve the craving of the hunger of their children, they created sufficient heat by burning some paper and strips of leather, cut out of their old worn shoes, to boil a little water, and so make some tea. I knew the case myself; it was most piteous."

"It was most pitiful, indeed," said a small, well-formed woman at my side. She was inexpensively but well-dressed, her *petite* figure showing to advantage; her face was tender and sympathetic. Mrs. Benson, I found, was her name. "How many children were there? What did you do for them, Mr. Grately?"

"There were five, madam; the youngest a baby in arms. I got them immediate relief—food, coal, and covering—for they were in want of everything."

"Of course, it was very dreadful," said the lady in blue, a Mrs. Smithson, whose husband was very wealthy, and represented a city constituency; "but their conduct was very wasteful."

"No doubt, Mrs. Smithson," replied the clergyman, "but consider the circumstances, and the great ignorance of the poorer classes; ignorance for which I fear we are responsible."

"But, tell me, Arthur," said Lady Hopfield, who was Mr. Grately's first cousin; "did not the husband drink, or was he not lazy?"

"I fear I must acknowledge, poor fellow, that he did drink sometimes."

"Ah, there it is, you see, there's the mischief," remarked

Lord Hopfield, who was a rising but eccentric politician. "No one need starve in England, if he will only work and keep out of the public-house."

"There's a great deal," replied Mr. Grately, "in what you say; and I wish that all the public-houses could be closed."

"Oh, that would never do in England," answered our host; "an Englishman likes his glass of beer, and usually knows when he has had enough. Why should Jones be deprived of his beer because Smith takes too much? It will never do to interfere with an Englishman's liberty. Like an eminent prelate, I would rather see England free than sober."

"With all due respect to the eminent prelate and yourself, he has not fairly stated the alternative. His paradox gives us the choice of two alternatives—to be free and drunk, or to be sober and enslaved. The terms of each of the alternatives have no relation to each other. A sober people are more likely to preserve their freedom than a drunken people; but the paradox notwithstanding, it will be admitted that the time has come for statesmen to deal with this crying evil."

"Another thing," remarked Mrs. Smithson; "these poor people seem to delight in having such large families. Why, I have heard of a man—a poor labourer—who actually had twelve children! Such extravagance and immorality."

The slightest suspicion of a smile brightened the faces of the remainder of the guests at this curious charge.

"If anything," she continued, "would induce me to agree with those horrid letters in the papers about marriage,

it would be the recklessness of the poorer classes in regard to marriage. A man who has only a room to take his wife to, without a stick of furniture, will nevertheless marry with a light heart, even before he is one-and-twenty; I've heard of lots of cases."

"I think you are right there, madam," replied Mr. Grately; "but let me ask you again to consider. These poor people see very little prospect of improvement before them; they have never known the comfort that is essential to people like ourselves, or that we think essential; their fathers and mothers before them acted in the same improvident way—as their fathers did, so do they. In their class they act like the young people in our own, who marry on three hundred year; very imprudent, no doubt. Yet this very imprudence calls into exercise higher qualities, and the wife and the husband are mutually helpful to each other. Their miserable condition plunges them into their improvidence. Of course, I am not defending such improvident and early marriages; I am only pointing out their causes and their contingent advantages."

"Well," said Lady Hopfield, "whatever be the cause of their wretched condition, it is our duty to help them—that is where we women come in."

"Of course, Lady Hopfield," responded Mrs. Smithson, "I agree with that, and am always ready, I hope, to assist."

"Yes," said Mrs. Benson, "we are all agreed that they, our fellow-creatures, have claims upon our kindness and sympathy; that we must help them in their need."

"Yes, my dear Mrs. Benson, I am confident of that;

but there is still a more excellent way; we should teach them to help themselves, so that they may not, unless in exceptional cases, require help from others."

"Ah, that is, I fear, a Utopian idea."

"I do not think so, Lord Hopfield."

"Well, how would you begin?"

"I have said, that I would ultimately close all public-houses, and I would begin by diminishing their number; then I would give the people easier access to the soil; a peasant proprietary, or rather, the existence of small farmers, cultivating their own land, would diminish the tendency of population to towns and cities."

"I do not see how this can be done," replied his lordship. "The land already produces as much as it can be made to yield; nor does it pay those who are engaged in cultivation. The land will not bear a large population."

"You are aware," replied Mr. Grately, "that the percentage of cultivators of the soil is smaller in England than in any other European country. In Russia it is eighty-six per cent. of the population; in Belgium fifty-one; in Holland sixteen; in Great Britain only twelve. Surely a change in this respect is possible, when we take into account the fertility of the soil!"

"A peasant proprietary would mean the extinction of the landed gentry of England; and that would be a revolution for which none of us is prepared," replied our host, thoughtfully. For Lord Hopfield was young, and although a man of intellectual sympathies with reforming ideas, had not yet emancipated himself from the prejudices of his class. Under the influence of his wife, however, his hereditary prejudices were softening. He was a man

singularly accessible to new ideas. This was my rapid estimate of him. After a somewhat long pause I ventured to say:—

"In addition to making a material reduction in the number of drinking-shops, and so diminishing the temptation to drinking, we must educate the people and elevate their tastes, that they may be able to share in intellectual and æsthetic pleasures, and thus create an influence that will raise them above their present debased tastes."

"Yes, educate them above their station, and unfit them for their condition in life," remarked Mr. Smithson, the husband of the lady in blue.

"Over-education," he continued, "is one of the fertile causes of the present agitation and restlessness. No one is satisfied with his position. Everyone wants to clamber up to that immediately above him. The labourer wants his son to be a clerk, the shopkeeper to make a gentleman of his; their daughter must learn to play the piano; and instead of becoming domestic servants, they become milliners and barmaids, with what results the correspondence in one of the daily papers has shown us. If people were contented with their position, we should hear much less of their poverty. Be contented with your station in life, is my remedy."

"Permit me to say," replied Mr. Grately, "while agreeing with you that everyone should be contented with his lot in life, yet that such contentment is by no means inconsistent with a desire and an effort to improve one's position. The notion of keeping people in their proper position is to me an odious and unchristian idea."

"Why, doesn't the Church herself say that God has

placed every man in his proper position, and that he ought to do his duty there?" exclaimed the M.P.

"The words you probably refer to are not quite as you quote them; they are to the effect that we must do our duty in that state of life in which it has pleased God to place us."

"There, that's plain enough—God has placed him there. Let him stay there, that's what I say."

"If these words are to be applied as you seem to understand them, then no one should try to advance himself from one position to another. Just let me say, in passing, that we all know an excellent Bishop of our Church whose mother, it is said, took in washing. Her son did not—and the Church is a gainer that he did not—remain in that state of life in which, you would say, God has placed him, with an instruction to remain there.

"What the Church teaches by the words quoted is, that wherever he is placed, there he is to do his duty—that is all. That he is to make no effort to improve his position in life is not said; and if the words could be so interpreted, all the experiences of life would protest against such an interpretation. But I would go further, and say that it is our Christian duty to improve the position of every child in the kingdom. Every boy should receive the education of a gentleman, so far as he is capable of receiving it; and every girl should receive the education of a lady, with the same limitation. They are God's children, and it is a shame and a sin that we do not treat them as such, and make them worthy of their Father."

This sentiment was a surprise to all, myself included.

"Would not human life be happier and more beautiful if it were so?" reasoned Mr. Grately. The sentiment was, however, condemned on all sides as Utopian and impossible without further argument. Mrs. Benson, however, replied:

"While I would like to see everyone educated according to his station in life, and possess some of the comforts which others have in fuller measure, yet permit me to say that I think your opinion rests upon a fundamental error: that material advantage is a chief end and aim of life. Riches are not necessary to either happiness or goodness; a rich person may be very miserable and very wicked, while a poor man may be both good and happy. Indeed, if he is good he must be happy. That was brought out so clearly in a speech which the late Lord Cairns delivered. And besides, if all were rich, the discipline of life would fail; kindness to the poor and sympathy with them in their sufferings would be impossible; we should all lose by such a change. I couldn't live without my poor, and you know it is said they shall never cease out of the land."

"Nor will they, my dear lady; misfortune, incompetence, vice, will always bring poverty and suffering. But even were it otherwise, kindness may always be exercised on those around us; while suffering and loss, which are our common lot in this life, will always afford ample scope for the exercise of sympathy."

"But if all were educated as you wish, Mr. Grately," observed Mrs. Smithson, "who would cook our food; or clean our boots?" she added, smiling.

"I do not think," he replied, "that any of us would be

the worse, or less a gentleman or lady, if we cooked our own food or blacked our own boots. And if our brethren, God's children, are to be kept in poverty and ignorance, simply that life may be easier for the few, I for one would be ashamed to claim from them the performance of such menial offices. Then, the existence and maintenance of classes is an ingenious device, for no higher purpose than to maintain a few people in luxurious idleness. Do you remember," he added, turning to Lady Hopfield, "that the author of the *Day of Doom* represents the patriarchs as having, by magical art, diminished the size of man, in order that they might keep them in servitude and obtain their services to clean their boots and to cook their food. Is this an example that we should imitate? No, let us elevate the whole of our brethren, if it can be done, and so far as it can be done. How pleasant would the world then be! For man and woman, especially woman, educated and refined, are the most lovely sight upon earth, when found in the way of righteousness.

"To have every girl clear eyed, straight limbed and shapely; well educated and companionable; lady-like and refined, of womanly nature—

'A perfect woman, nobly planned;'

"Every boy well built and manly; well trained in body and mind; with a bold front, yet gentle manners: this would be a consummation that would change the face of the world, and would transform it into another paradise."

"Utopian, sir, quite Utopian," exclaimed Mr. Smithson.

"May be so; yet the end desired is worth an effort—a long-sustained effort," replied Mr. Grately.

"It is a knotty problem," reflected Lord Hopfield, "and one that we shall not solve in our day. Whatever may be possible at the origin of society, it is clear that such a scheme as Grately advocates so earnestly could not be carried out in England without a revolution. We should have to raze the present structure to its foundations, and rebuild from foundation to pinnacle; and in the process who can forecast the damage?"

Here Lady Hopfield rose from her seat, and with the other ladies and Mr. Grately passed out of the dining-room.

"These ideas of our friend are quite impracticable," said one gentleman, who had not hitherto taken any part in the conversation. "It is singular to find a clergyman advocating them."

"You should make him a bishop," said Mr. Smithson.

"Well," replied our host, "it is not my province to make bishops, and I fear that bishops holding such revolutionary opinions would hardly do at present. He is an excellent fellow, and is devoted to his work in the East-end. He lives too much among the grinding poverty of the people, and it probably makes him morbid. It would do him good to get him out of the place, only he won't move. It is only on rare occasions that my wife can get him to come to us. Shall we adjourn, and join the ladies; Lady Hopfield has a reception to-night."

We all rose and passed into the drawing-room, already well filled with a distinguished company. I stayed but a short time, and took an early opportunity of getting away, although the rain was falling and the night was extremely cold.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CHILDREN OF THE POOR.—LITTLE ROBBY.

THE night was bitterly cold, and rain was falling lightly. Putting up my umbrella, I resolved to walk across St. James's Park, and take a 'bus down the Strand to the office of the *London Express*. I knew that natural heat would stand me in better stead than artificial, so I walked on hastily, and soon my body was all in a glow. After I had crossed the park, I turned into Spring Gardens, and under one of the houses there I caught sight of a bundle of clothes, lying in a slight recess between two houses. Stopping to look at it, I recognised the form of a child, lying under the shelter of the houses. At once I stooped down to examine, and saw it was a young child, not more than three years old, wretchedly clad, with a piece of a shawl wrapped round its shoulders. His hand supported his little head as he slept. I knelt down, and looked closely at the little thing. The light of the moon enabled me to see his face distinctly. He was fair and pretty looking, and as he lay sleeping peacefully, I recalled to my mind the face of my little brother, who died many years ago, before he was four; and remembered how my dear mother hung over him as he lay in his last sleep. This memory touched my heart, and awakened my sympathies. I put my hand gently upon the face of the sleeping child. Was he asleep? It was cold to the touch. Immediately he started, and sitting up began to cry, "Mammy, mammy, I'se told."

"What's your name, my dear? Where is mammy?" I asked, gently laying my hand on him. To this inquiry I got no other answer than the renewed cry of, "Mammy, mammy," followed by an outburst of tears.

I took him by the hand, which he trustfully placed in mine. He was cold and wet, and, as his simple words told me, "'ungly." What could be done at this hour? I looked round carefully to see if his mother—some poor, drunken creature, I supposed—was near, but could see nothing; the street was deserted, although in the distance I could hear the footsteps of passengers hurrying in the cold. Holding him by the hand, I led him into Trafalgar Square, not knowing what to do with my helpless charge. While I was doubting what I should next do, the measured tread of a policeman suggested my course. The policeman was accustomed to such experiences. He said at once:

"Oh, I'll take him to the station, sir; I suspect his mother's lying drunk somewhere in the park, or she's run off from him. Lots of 'em do it."

"He's very cold, policeman," I said, "and wet and hungry."

"Yes, poor little devil! They've hard times of it."

All this while the little fellow clung to me, and looked up into the face of first one, then the other, as if he knew his fate depended upon our consultation. Here he broke out again, "Mammy, I want mammy."

"What is your name, my little man?" inquired the kind-hearted policeman. Nothing could be obtained from him but cries of "Mammy." Putting a shilling in the hand of the policeman, and recommending the little

mite to his care, I hurried on to the office, promising to look in at the station next day to see how the child fared.

This was a striking commentary, I thought, on our conversation at Lord Hopfield's. Here, almost under the very shadow of the houses of the rich, was one of the children of the poor, dying of starvation and cold, whose lot would be enviable if he had only the crumbs of the feast in which I had that night participated. However, work, necessary work, cut short my meditations, and the incident was dismissed from my mind.

About eleven o'clock the next day (for I was out early), I called on my way to the office at the police-station to see if the child's friends had come to claim him, and met one of the inspectors at the door in conversation with one whom I recognised as the Assistant Commissioner.

"Come in," he said politely, when I had introduced myself. "It was you who found the little waif. Let me see—I daresay he's been claimed before this. Bless you! lots of children are found and brought to the station. It's a matter of daily occurrence. Kindly wait, Mr. Graham, I'll inquire."

To the inspector's inquiry a respectful orderly replied that the child was still unclaimed, and that he could not give his name.

"The mother's sure to turn up, sir," he added, touching his cap.

"I suspect," said the commissioner—a Mr. Granvers, a man of good family, "that the mother was on the drink, and will be in a fine state when she comes round. What is the child like, Kenny?" he inquired of the orderly.

"A poor little chap, but decent," was the reply.

After a few words with the Inspector, I was about to withdraw from the office, when a woman entered with hurried step and anxious look.

"Oh, sir," she began, "I've lost my little Robby. He's just three years old, sir. I left him for a moment last night while I went into a shop, and when I came out he was gone." She said all this all at once, without drawing breath.

"I daresay we can find him for you, Mrs. ——. What's your name?"

"Brownell, sir. Oh! I've been looking for him all night."

Her appearance, worn and anxious, was evidence of the truth of her words. She was a tall woman, with brown eyes and soft brown hair, well-formed, slightly stooping, must have been handsome once, apparently about forty, but was probably five or seven years younger.

"I had to take some work home late," she continued, "and Robby wanted to look into a window, so I left him, telling him not to move, while I entered the shop. I was kept a little longer than I expected, and when I came out he was gone. Thinking he might have tried to find his way home, for Robby's very sharp, sir, I walked back down the Strand and Fleet-street looking for him; and I've been looking for him all night, and so has my husband." And here the poor woman burst into tears. When the policeman brought the little fellow, comfortably wrapped up, into the office, the mother caught up Robby in her arms, and sobbed over him. "Oh, thank you, sir. This is my child; this is Robby."

"Well, Mrs. Brownell, your thanks are due to this

gentleman. It was he who found him, and sent him on to the station; and he has been kind enough to call this morning to make further inquiries."

The woman expressed her thanks to me, and was about to leave, carrying Robby in her arms, when the Inspector said:

"Oh, Mrs. Brownell, you had better leave us your address. Where do you live; and what does your husband do?"

To these inquiries she replied, giving her address in Whitechapel—a small alley off Dock-street, and informing us that her husband was a mattress maker. After her departure, Mr. Granvers said, rising from his seat:

"I daresay her story is correct. She looks all right; but you can never tell." The Commissioner walked with me chatting as far as Charing Cross, where we parted, and I returned to my lodgings.

During the day I followed up my acquaintance with the Bensons, by taking an early advantage of Mrs. Benson's invitation to call on them. I told her of my adventure of the previous night and the early morning. She listened with ready sympathy, and was deeply interested.

"Poor child! to think that while we were so comfortably placed, he was lying out in the bitter cold, crying for food. It is all so perplexing."

"Well, it's all over now, and Robby is none the worse for his night out, I hope."

"But his poor mother—what a night she must have passed! To lose one of my dear children would nearly drive me mad; and the poor thing must have been distracted."

"Our friend, Mrs. Smithson, would say that women of that class don't feel as keenly as mothers like yourself."

"Oh! I don't think she would say that. A mother's love is the same in all classes. It is the one divine thing that never dies in a human heart. Can a woman forget her suckling child? Yea, she *may* forget—as if such a thing were almost impossible."

On the following Monday I was down in Whitechapel, and finding myself near Dock Street, I thought I would look up my little friend and see how he fared after his midnight experience. With some little difficulty I found the alley, and then the rooms of the mattress maker. The door was opened by a bright-looking girl of about ten, who was only half-clad—the morning was bitterly cold, for October was closing. On looking into the room I saw a man in shirt and trousers only, and his wife, like her daughter, without an overgown—the mother of Robby, working at a mattress.

"Oh, Rob, this is the gentleman that found Robby. Come in, sir," she added. "Here's Robby," directing my attention to the child, who lay in a corner of the room, carefully wrapped up in some old clothes, for there was not a spark of fire. While my attention was drawn to the child, the mother passed into the inner room and presently returned with her gown on. The place was bare of furniture: two boxes and an old chair, with a kettle and a couple of pots, were all I could see. I could not see into the inner room, but I caught a glimpse of some bagging lying on the floor, and knew afterwards that this represented all the bed that the family possessed.

"Well, Robby, how are you getting on?" I inquired of him. The man paused in his work to say:

"He's very little the worse for his night out, sir. Thank you for picking him up. He's caught a little cold—that's all."

"I think he'll be all right, sir, directly. I must get some medicine for it."

"It's very little we can afford for medicine," was the man's reply to his wife's remark. "It's hard enough to find food for the children—and the kitten."

For a little kitten, which had been lying in Robby's arms, at this moment jumped out of its resting-place, and made a lunge at the stranger, spitting in mock anger. As soon as it had challenged me in this way, it darted off in pursuit of a piece of wool that was being "tagged" by the young girl, and seizing it as if it were a mouse, shook it, tossed it into the air, and caught it as it fell, retiring after this feat into the arms of Robby, who, with his sister, had followed its gambols with a faint smile. The kitten curling itself up in the child's arms, lay purring, and keeping its eyes upon the visitor.

"Ah," I said in reply to the man's remark, "I suppose it's not an over well-paid employment?"

"Well paid, sir! Why, me and the missus and the children together—there are two others—('Yes; they're at school this morning, sir,' explained the mother)—can't earn more than fifteen shillings a week at it, working twelve hours a day, and then the landlord takes four shillings for rent."

Eleven shillings a week for food and clothing for six people! And here was I getting eight pounds a week! I

was conscious of a painful sense of contrast, especially when emphasised by the presence of the children, with their pinched appearance and miserable surroundings.

"I am glad," I said, "that Robby is none the worse for his dissipation, except for a little cold. Let me advise you," I continued, "to get him a bottle of medicine, and I hope you'll let me pay for it," I added, putting a couple of shillings into the woman's hand.

"Thank you, sir. God bless you. It's hard enough to find money for food; but I'll go round to the chemist's and get Robby some medicine at once."

CHAPTER XV.

THE REV. ARTHUR GRATELY: AN EAST-END CLERGYMAN.

As I turned into the street I met the Rev. Arthur Grately, who was very much surprised to meet me in his district. I explained the reason of my presence, to which he replied:

"I know the family well. They are highly respectable, but wretchedly poor, as you see. They came, some years back, from the country—Wiltshire, I think, and have had a hard fight for bare life in this cruel city. But as you are here and interested in these things, you had better come with me and I'll show you my schools. We have nearly 500 children, all of the same class, and are doing all we can for them, to give them a chance." I accepted the

invitation, and walked with my friend towards his schools, while we rehearsed the conversation at Lord Hopfield's. "The worst of it is that these people can't enter into sympathy with real reform in regard to the poor. They are quite ready to subscribe for their immediate relief. Lady Hopfield is as good as gold, and he is always ready to subscribe. This too, is the case with many in their position; although, of course, there are too many who look upon the poor as a nuisance and a tax upon their means. But temporary relief is one thing, permanent reform a very different one. Their fixed opinion is that poverty is due not to those conditions of life which we seek to change, but to improvidence: early marriages, drunkenness, or wastefulness. They can't realise that these vices, so far as they are vices, are the fruits of their miserable surroundings. Another idea which possesses them is, that poverty is due to the over-crowding of towns. This is only partly the case. They crowd into the towns, poor things, because they hope to improve their miserable lot in the country, and too often they fail. For London is so vast, and the number of people so appalling, that the individual is lost in the mass—is no longer poor Tom or poor Bill, but one of the poor. And then, as you heard the other night, people strive to justify the existence of the state of things that obtains by saying it is of Divine appointment! 'The poor will never cease out of the land'—'Classes must always exist'—'There must always be rich and poor'; sayings that are only true in a sense. Our social and economic system is a struggle between the strong and the weak; the smart and the simple; with the inevitable result that the feeble and ignorant go to the wall, and are

kept there, except in rare cases; and yet there are sweet-natured children enough to brighten the world, if they got a chance in the race of life. But here we are at my schools."

An oasis in a desert; large, well-built stone schools, standing in about half an acre of land, planted with trees, plantain, oak, and elm. On entering the school grounds, where numbers of children were playing (it was recess time), we were immediately surrounded by them: they ran up to my companion and took him by the hand, which some of them kissed; others laid their heads affectionately on his breast. He had at least half a dozen clinging to him. They were all of the poorest class, but looked clean, and were neatly though poorly dressed. Taking me through the several class-rooms, Grately introduced me to his "teachers," who seemed, so far as I could judge, to be like their clergyman, in sympathy with their poor charges. Some of the teachers, he told me, had been taken from the poorest classes, and had been trained for their office in his school. Their lot was, in consequence, vastly different to what it would otherwise have been. Grately explained to me the whole work of the school, including the mid-day meal, which was provided for the scholars, and for which those who could afford it paid one penny. I watched the children at the dinner hour file into the dining-room, where a plain, good meal was spread for them, under the superintendence of a motherly woman. I could not forbear noticing the respectable appearance of the children who thronged to the long tables. Upon my remarking this fact, my friend replied:

"Yes; even the children of the poorest can usually

make a respectable appearance. We insist upon clean hands and face, tidy, decent looking clothes. But they are wretchedly poor. You shall learn for yourself. "Here, Willy, come this way," to a sturdy-looking lad of nine. "Tell this gentleman, Willy, what you had for dinner yesterday." Willy hung his head, looking sideways at the rapidly filling table. "Don't be afraid, my lad, this gentleman thinks that you may not be in need of a dinner. Tell him what you had yesterday."

Willy, on hearing this, raised his eyes to me reproachfully, and opened them widely in astonishment.

"What was your Sunday's dinner, Willy?"

"A piece of bread, sir; that was all mother had."

"And what did you have for breakfast before you came to school?"

"Nothing, sir; mother went out to work, and wasn't back before we left."

"She's an office cleaner," explained Grately, "and must be out at four or five o'clock. That will do, Willy; run to your place and eat a good dinner. Now let us ask this girl that is coming with her little brother. Come this way, Sally. This gentleman, Sally, wants to know what you had for dinner yesterday. Kindly tell him."

Sally, like Willy, hung her head, and drew her little brother, whom she held by the hand, closer to her. "Don't be afraid, my dear, but tell the gentleman. Did you have bread and butter?"

"Oh, no, sir, we never have butter," replied the child, looking up in surprise, "we haven't had butter for four months."

"Well, what did you have, my dear?" I asked.

"Nothing," whispered the girl.

"What! nothing at all?"

"No, sir; father wasn't paid on Saturday, and—and—we had to go without."

"What did you have for breakfast?" asked Grately, softly.

"The woman next door gave me a piece of bread, but—but—"

"You gave it to Tom?"

"Yes, sir," said the little maiden, relieved.

"Well, run off, my dear, and make a large dinner. How's Robby to-day?"

"Oh, he's better, sir, thank you."

"That," said my friend, "is the daughter of the Brownells, and the sharp little boy at her heels is her brother."

I felt a strange lump rising in my throat, and felt, too, ashamed of myself and my comforts

"And how do you keep this up?" I asked.

"Various people help me, Lady Hopfield among the number."

"Let me give a small subscription towards this object; I wish it was ten times as much, but it will not be the last."

"Oh, come, I did not bring you here to fleece you; I have enough at present," he said, refusing my money.

"Please, Mr. Grately, let me give something, if it is only to relieve my own feelings, and excuse myself for living in comfort while so many are in need of the very necessaries of life."

I was appalled by the mass of misery which this little

incident revealed. This was only one small, very small, part of the East-end of London. It might be multiplied a hundred times, and then it would not be all told!

CHAPTER XVI.

ONE WAY MORE TO THE PIT.

ON the Thursday after the Monday that I visited Mr. Grately's schools, I called, in the afternoon, on my friend, Mrs. Benson, before whose beautiful house lay a garden of green, called Winchester Square, enclosed by an open iron fence. She was interested in my account of the schools, and expressed a wish to visit them; was deeply moved by the tale of the dinnerless children, and the condition of the Brownell family.

"I would like to do something for them; the poor mother must have a hard life. And to see her children growing up in the midst of such surroundings, and in the direst poverty, is worst of all. What is she like?"

"She is a tall, well-made woman, and might be graceful under other circumstances. She must have been, in her young days, quite pretty. She reminded me strangely of Mrs. Smithson, whom I met at Lady Hopfield's, but is ten years older."

"If she is anything like Mrs. Smithson, she must be pretty. Kindly make arrangements for me, Mr. Graham, when it is convenient; I should very much like to see her and her children, who are about the same age, the

girls are, as Margaret and Sybil. But you have not seen my girls; let me send for them."

Presently her two daughters appeared, the younger carrying a small kitten in her arms. The moment it was put down, it made a lunge at me and spat, offering me instant fight, after which it commenced a gyratory movement in pursuit of its tail, to the great amusement of its youthful friends. This done, the kitten darted behind the curtain, and, wrapping itself in its soft folds, endeavoured to pull it to the ground.

"Oh, you dear little kitty," cried Sybil, catching it in her arms, where it quietly reposed until a further opportunity for another wild gambol offered.

"Surely, I have seen that kitten before, Sybil," I remarked; "it's quite familiar to me."

"Oh, no; we only got it yesterday; Margaret got it from two poor girls while mamma was in a shop—didn't you, Maggy?"

"Yes," replied her sister, "two such poor-looking children; we saw them standing in the street, with the kitten in their arms, and Syb. and I went up to it, and stroked it, and it spat at us, just as it did at you. The children told us they were going to give it away, and that we might have it if we liked, as their father wouldn't let them keep it. Wasn't it a shame? Only we were to be kind to it—as if we wouldn't, Titty—and let them come and see it sometimes. But I told them I would buy it from them with my own money, and mamma said I might, and so we carried Titty home, such a dear!" Here Titty's nose came in for a shower of kisses from the two little maidens.

"And I must tell Mr. Graham, dear, that the kitten cost you half-a-crown."

"It was all my own, mamma, wasn't it? and I'm sure the poor children needed it; they were so pleased, and shook hands with Titty, and kissed him—for its a boy—when they went away."

I was very much interested in this child's tale, for I knew now that the frisky kitten, whose lot had fallen in such pleasant places, was the same which I lately saw with little Robby, my midnight friend.

I told Mrs. Benson my surmise, who was equally surprised at the coincidence.

"How very singular it is that we have both been brought into relation with the same family; as if God intended some purpose in this. For you know, not a sparrow falls to the ground without Him."

The whole story of the Brownells, so far as it has appeared in this narrative, was told over again for the benefit of the two girls, whose sympathies, at an early age, were thus awakened in their poorer brethren.

I had no opportunity of fulfilling my promise to Mrs. Benson for some days after this conversation. On Friday night, in glancing over the police-court reports for the next day's paper, I was startled by a paragraph to the following effect: —"Yesterday (this) morning Robert Brownell, a mattress maker, living in Whitechapel, was charged with being drunk on the previous day and assaulting his wife, Sarah Brownell. Constable Bayfield deposed that he found the prisoner drunk, and fighting with his wife, in a lane off Dock Street. 'On attempting to arrest him, the man made a desperate resistance, during which

Bayfield's uniform was severely handled, and much damaged. The wife, whose face bore marks of ill-usage, made a piteous appeal to the presiding magistrate to let the prisoner off, as he was always kind to her. This being the first case against the man, a light penalty was inflicted, a fine of five shillings, and £1 for injuring the policeman's uniform, or fourteen days' imprisonment in default." I was horrified to read this, and resolved to call at once on the poor woman. I had arranged, however, to go out of town, down into Kent, on Saturday morning, returning on Sunday night. So I put off my visit till my return.

Early on Monday morning I started for Whitechapel, arriving at Dock Street a little before twelve o'clock. I was surprised to find Mrs. Brownell's rooms empty, not a trace of the family remaining. The woman next door could only tell me that the landlord had on Saturday evening seized what little furniture the poor woman possessed, and that Mrs. Brownell, with her family, had left the neighbourhood.

"Have you any idea where they have gone to?"

"None, your honour; into the river, like enough; for life is miserable enough."

Mr. Grately could give me no information, and was surprised to hear what I told him. "I always knew that he would take a little, but never suspected what you tell me. To strike his patient wife! When he first came here, some eight years ago, he was an extremely sober man. Ah! well, this is the usual course—down hill, down hill. God forbid that his poor wife should follow him, or worse will ensue."

I was very much distressed, and kept away from my

friends in Winchester Square, hoping to be able to discover Mrs. Brownell's place of refuge. As I could hear nothing of her, neither could Mr. Grately discover any trace, I resolved to take counsel with Mrs. Benson. She, too, was very much shocked at what she heard, for she had not read the police court paragraph. She had, however, some news of interest.

"The children were here only yesterday," she said. "Margaret and Sybil were playing in the square with their kitten, when three little children stopped by the fence and watched them through the open railings. As the kitten darted about, playing hide-and-seek with the children, they heard a voice coming from the little group exclaim, 'That's Titty, that's my Titty'; and then call 'Titty, Titty.' Margaret stopped in her play, and looking up saw and recognised one of the girls. My two girls immediately went across to the little children and spoke to them. They asked to be allowed to see the kitten, which was put through the railings into their hands. Sybil told me that the kitten knew its old friends and playfellows, and began playing with them and licking them, much to the children's delight. They looked very wretched and miserable. So Margaret ran in to me, and got permission to give them some bread and butter. I myself went out and spoke to them. The two girls had with them their little brother Robby, who I thought was looking ill, and had a severe cold, the effects of the bitter night. I gave them a little more food, and told them that I hoped to come and see their mother soon, and sent them away happy."

"You did not ask where they were living?" I inquired.

"No," she replied. "I, of course, thought that they

were in their old home, and that you knew where they lived. I am so sorry, but they are sure to come again."

Nothing more could be done. Day after day passed away, and we heard nothing more of the family. I felt anxious about them, as I knew that their necessities must be great; without furniture, the husband and father in jail, and no one to help the poor woman in her need.

About five or six days after this conversation, as I was returning to my lodgings rather earlier than usual, when I reached a lonely part of one of the side streets, a woman spoke to me. This was an event of frequent occurrence, and it was my invariable practice to respond with a cheerful "good-night," and pass on. For, however vicious people may be, they are still human beings. Something, however, in the tone of the woman's voice arrested a closer attention, and awakened my interest in an unusual degree. I had no sooner bidden her good-night, than she turned from me, exclaiming, "No, no, I didn't mean it," and hastened away. The slight glimpse I had got of her face by the aid of the moonlight (she was standing in the shadow) revealed the speaker to me. It was Mrs. Brownell. So hurrying after her, I cried, "Stop, stop, Mrs. Brownell, I want to speak to you; stop." She stopped, and when I came up with her, cried, "Forgive me, sir, but they are starving, and little Robby's dying; I wouldn't do it, only for them." The poor woman was trembling and crying. "You were quite right, my dear Mrs. Brownell," I said, appearing not to understand her, "you were quite right to stop me; of course I will help you. I wish only you had come to me sooner. Come," I said, laying my hand on her arm, "tell me all about it. I have been looking for

you, and so, too, has Mr. Grately. We have been very much concerned about you."

"Oh, sir, don't tell him; I only did it for them. I would rather die than live, only for my children;" and she burst out afresh, sobbing. I walked on with her in silence a little way, until she grew calmer, and then heard her tale of suffering. I gave her three or four shillings, all I had in my pocket, and, noting down her address, said I would ask a lady to come and see her in the morning, or come and see her myself. "Don't, sir," she said, beseechingly, "don't tell her." To this request I made no reply, for it passed rapidly through my mind that Mrs. Benson would understand and sympathise with her the more if she knew all. After leaving her, I went on my way to my lodgings, feeling elated at my discovery, and yet penetrated with shame by the revelation of the manner in which our sisters are degraded and cast under foot by the pressure of poverty.

CHAPTER XVII.

ALAS! POOR ROBBY!

I PAID a very early visit to Winchester Square, and informed Mrs. Benson of my midnight experience—telling her everything. She was shocked that such things could happen in a Christian country, in the midst of numbers of people ready to help the unfortunate.

"How shocking! to get food for her starving children, and one of them dying! Yet there's something almost noble in it, mistaken and dreadful as it is. I will go at once, and do all I can for them." I handed her a small sum of money, and promised more.

"Oh," she said, "I can get help from several people, as well as from the parish funds, for such a case."

"May I call in the afternoon and hear your report?"

"Of course, of course," she answered. "I will take with me something for the poor sick child." And she hastened away to prepare it.

In the afternoon, at three o'clock, I called again, and received Mrs. Benson's report. She was a woman of tender sympathies, as the reader has learnt, but was possessed of strong common-sense and good business method. She told her tale in a plain unvarnished way.

"They had nothing in the house, except some old bagging; all their clothes, except their underclothing, had been pawned for food. She gave me the pawn-tickets. The poor things had had nothing to eat for forty-eight hours; not even the sick child, who is, I fear, dying; you know what the nights have been. I took the things out of pawn immediately, and got them coals, blankets, and warm nourishing food; I also sent for Dr. Newton to attend the child. He says he does not think he can possibly live, as he is so low for want of food and proper attention. There, that's shortly the state of the case. She is full of gratitude to you, and cannot sufficiently express her thanks for the help you have sent her. It is the most pitiful case I have ever known. It is strange that our lot is bound up in some way with this woman's; and, like you, I could not

help noticing her likeness to Mrs. Smithson. Singular that people so differently placed should be so much alike. She is almost like an elder sister. But I hope to learn more of her presently. Poor thing, she will require some time to recover. The poor children looked so thin and worn. Oh, it's heart-breaking that such things can be in God's world!'

The sympathetic reader will understand that to a young man of six or seven and-twenty, whose experience of life was limited, such a case as the one I am describing was deeply interesting; and will not regret that I dwell upon it with some particularity. I thought it would be kind to Mrs. Brownell if I looked in, to ask after Robby; so the next day I called, and saw that the condition of the Brownell family was fairly comfortable. A bed had been bought, a small table, and a chair or two; a small piece of matting put upon the floor, and Robby's surroundings were made comfortable. The woman was full of gratitude and apologies. Fearful of seeming to intrude myself too much upon her, I stayed only a short time, and left her with a few words of sympathy, for it was evident to me that the child would die.

"Oh, sir, do you think there's any hope?" she asked, tearfully.

"He's very ill, Mrs. Brownell, but then he's young, and he has the best attention and care, and all that is required for his comfort. Let us hope for the best."

On Friday afternoon I called at Winchester Square on my way into town. Mrs. Benson gave me a bad account of Robby. The doctor had said that there was no hope.

While we were talking the servant came in to say that the two children of Mrs. Brownell were at the door.

"Oh, ma'am, Robby's dying, and wants to see the kitten," was the simple and touching message which they brought.

The kitten was straightway packed off by the little suppliants, with many instructions from Margaret and Sybil as to his care; a message, pencilled on Mrs. Benson's card, was sent off to the doctor; and she herself prepared to go round to the alley where they lived.

"If I may, I should like to go with you."

To this proposal she readily assented. When we reached the room it was evident that the child's days were numbered. He was lying on his mother's bed, the little kitten curled up upon his breast, and folded by his arms; his eyes were closed. His mother leant over him watching the flickering life of the dying child, and weeping sorely. The father, who had come home that morning, was seated in a chair, shading his eyes (his tears falling silently). He had come home to see his little favourite die, and knew that he was in a sense responsible for what he saw. The other children moved about quietly and tearfully, knowing that the awful Presence was in their midst. Mrs. Benson took her place by the side of the bed, and proceeded to give the little sufferer a spoonful of chicken broth, watched by the mother with mournful gratitude. Robby's eyes unclosed to receive the nourishment, and then murmuring, "Titty, Titty," he folded his little arms more closely round his playfellow, who lay quietly, and closed them again.

The heavy breathing gave tokens of the progress of

the terrible inflammation, and apprised us that the end was near. One long sigh, and the opening of his eyes, which fell upon his mother's face, and the little sufferer was gone, entered within that mysterious veil which hides so much from our anxious questioning. The tears fell from Mrs. Benson's eyes as she closed those of the child, amid a wild burst of grief from the stricken mother and the wail of the children who stood round. The doctor drove up when all was over, but had he been present he could have done nothing. The case had long since passed beyond the reach of human skill.

"Ah," he said to me, as he drew on his gloves, "I see lots of such cases—dozens."

"Dozens," Mr. Grately had said, "scores," and if they were multiplied by hundreds the whole yearly tale would not be told.

As we walked back sadly, Mrs. Benson said, "If we could only see all the sufferings of one day, if our ears were keen enough to hear every wail that goes up to heaven, and if our hearts retained their sensitiveness, life would be unbearable. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together; and yet there is One that sees all, hears all, and He forgetteth not the complaint of the poor. But I often feel inclined to ask, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge the earth? O, I fear our sins will be visited upon our children. May heaven forbid!"

To this I felt impelled to say a fervent Amen.

LIBRARY

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE HEART OF SOCIETY.

MRS. BENSON'S sympathy was of an energetic kind, and expressed itself in an endeavour to materially improve the position of the poor family so painfully bereaved. Her efforts to console the afflicted mother were incessant, and frequent visits were paid to their wretched home, now assuming a more comfortable appearance. Meeting me after one of these, she said:

"I'm so glad to see you. I have had a long talk with our poor friend, and she has told me her sad story. She is the daughter of a small farmer in Wiltshire, named Routh. Their mother—for there was a second daughter—died when they were children. The elder sister went into service in a respectable family. She married, before she was twenty, a young labourer, her present husband, whose wages were only ten shillings a week. On my expressing my surprise at this imprudent step, she answered, 'I daresay it was a mistake, ma'am; but you see he wanted me and I liked him. It would be better if we could see all the misery beforehand not to marry. But then, ma'am, I shouldn't have had Mary and Sarah and Tom, and—and—poor Robby.' Of course, poor thing, this reminded her of her loss, and she broke down. After awhile she was able to go on with her story. On her father's death the farm, which her husband was to have had, passed to another tenant, work became scarcer and their lot harder, after the birth of her eldest child, Mary;

and so, like many others, they migrated, with hopeful hearts, to great London, where they have simply been absorbed and lost. After a time they settled down in Whitechapel at mattress-making, and there they have lived till now. She wishes that they had never left the country and its green fields. This explanation confirms what we heard from Mr. Grately at Lord Hopfield's. Times were bad for the farmers; they could not meet their heavy rents—heavy because the charges upon land are so many; and the labourer's lot suffered with that of the poor tenant. Hence they came to London."

"And what became of the elder sister?" I asked.

"Oh, she was servant in a clergyman's family for a time, and after the father's death she got a place in London, where she too was swallowed up. Her sister heard no more of her; this is twelve years ago, and she may be dead. She was very much attached to her, and has named her eldest daughter after her. I remember she told me that."

Nor did Mrs. Benson's efforts end here; she made many of her friends pay tribute for the benefit of the poor family. One incident in connection with her canvass was a notable one. She was calling, she said, on Lady Hopfield, when Mrs. Smithson was present. So she told them the story of this family, and solicited their assistance. Mrs. Smithson was much interested, and asked a number of question about Mrs. Brownell.

"What is her name?" was one of them.

"Brownell," replied Mrs. Benson.

"Oh, I mean her christian name."

"Ah, I don't know; probably Sarah, for her eldest

daughter is named after her own sister Mary, and her second, Sarah, was probably named after herself."

"I never saw Mrs. Smithson so much moved. She immediately promised me a subscription, which she would send, and do you know she actually sent me ten pounds, and told me that she would at any time be glad to help me in this way in my benevolent work. She is, you see, a kind-hearted woman, despite her hard opinions. We often misjudge people; and she insists that her name is not to be known to anyone, or she would be bothered out of her life. There, now, Mr. Graham, that's something pleasant to think of."

With the kind and generous help thus obtained, the condition of the family was much improved. Nor did Mrs. Benson's active benevolence end here. She got a maid's place for the eldest girl—for she was tall for her age—with one of her friends, in order that she might be trained for domestic service.

The husband had, as Grately feared, begun to go down hill, and although the pace was checked, yet the descent went on, slowly at first, but accelerating in speed after a time. But of this we shall unhappily hear more.

The experiences that I have related were like the opening of a door to me. They had shown me something of the reality of the sufferings and sorrows of the poor; and through that open door I saw stretching away, in almost infinite perspective, a region of hopeless human misery.

After this I began to look upon the agitations that abounded in London with sympathy. Even the political agitator's career assumed a different aspect to me. He was personally often highly objectionable, trading upon

the necessities of his class, but their urgent necessities, their crying wrongs, justified his existence, although not his methods. But I felt it is human to err. If only the methods were right, the remedy would not be so far to seek.

CHAPTER XIX.

ANOTHER DINNER-PARTY: THE WORKING MAN, AND HOW TO IMPROVE HIS CONDITION.

TEN years have passed since the events last recorded; ten years of ceaseless agitation, of varied and fruitless effort. The condition of the poor became yearly more trying and depressing; the efforts of public and political agitators became yearly more wild and revolutionary. Again I was dining at Lord Hopfield's, and some of our former acquaintances were present, with some persons that are new to these pages. Among the former were Mrs. (now Lady) Smithson and her husband, still M.P. for a city constituency, the Rev. Arthur Grately, Mr. Granvers, the Assistant Commissioner of Police, and the Rev. Wilfrid Dunstan, with whom we have but a slight acquaintance, but whom we are destined to know more intimately. Among those new to these pages:—Lady Lilias, daughter of the Earl of Twickenham, a young lady of beautiful but sad face, her father the Earl, and several others who need not be particularly mentioned.

"Do you think," said the Earl, addressing Lord

Hopfield, "there's any chance of the Land Bill passing the Lower House?"

"Not the least, as far as I can judge," that gentleman replied; "but if it does, I trust you will make short work of it in the House of Peers."

"That we certainly will. It was an extraordinary idea of the mover that the law of Settlement is merely the law of entail under another form; and that entail exists in reality though not in name."

"Yes; but it was a mere *argumentum ad populum*. But if the law of Settlement were repealed, I do not see in what way the working man would benefit by the change. Landlords less able and less willing to assist them would still remain, and the lot of the labourer would be harder. The last state would be worse than the first."

"Arthur," said Lady Hopfield, turning to her cousin, "has a strong opinion upon that point, haven't you, Arthur?"

"I certainly have," responded Mr. Grately, "and I wish I could get your husband, Cicely, to look at the subject from my point of view."

"Well, here I am, willing to be taught; fire away," said our host, good-humouredly.

"I have very little hope of seeing a change in my life-time (even though I should make a convert of you), for the sentiment in favour of a landed aristocracy is so powerful in England. It has been said that landlordism finds here a congenial home. People anxious to be of social importance think that the possession of a landed estate is a passport to that distinction, and this tendency strengthens the existing instinct. It is thought, too,

that to hunt over an estate is absolutely necessary to the maintenance of healthy English instincts. Little do such people think, if it be true, how few people have opportunity to possess these healthy English instincts. The sentiment is a formidable barrier to the desired reform and the breaking up of great estates."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed the Rev. Wilfrid Dunstan, "that our lawmakers should ever sanction so revolutionary a proceeding. The existence of the nobility and gentry is necessary to the development of the English character. They are objects, not only of admiration, but of imitation, and thus their existence tends to the ennobling of the average Englishman. A nobility without estates would be an anomaly. The whole class would tend to the level of tradesmen and dealers. Now, the Great House in the county is the rendezvous of all good society, and from it radiates a generous hospitality. The nobility and the gentry of England are the bulwark of the Church, and stand between the Crown and revolution."

"A very important sentiment," said the Earl.

"And one I fear that will long hinder the settlement of the people on the land," interposed Grately.

"Well," said Lord Hopfield, "suppose I concede the desirability of repealing the law of Settlement, I can't see in what way this will benefit the working classes, or even the farmers. Somebody else will buy their estates, and another great land-owner will take the place of the hereditary one. In what way will the farmer and his labourers be benefited by a mere change of landlords?"

"I am not at all sure that the estates would pass into the hands of another great land-owner; on the contrary,

I think it highly probable that the land would pass into the hands of the actual cultivators of the soil."

"Now, to take an actual case," said the Earl. "There's the estate of the Marquis of Elsford. He is anxious to get authority to sell, but to whom? To a wealthy brewer, who is ready to give him, it is said, a million and a half for his 90,000 acres."

"That might happen in a particular case; but it does not follow that it would be a type of all cases, if land transactions were unfettered. Even in the particular case the Earl mentions, the Marquis might find it to his advantage to cut up his estate into small farms, say of 300 acres each, and put them into the open market. There are hundreds of people, aye, thousands, in London and elsewhere, who have saved a little money, and would like to invest it in land, on which they and their families could live, and which they might cultivate; and even of the farmers, there are many who have saved money, and would like to own their farms if they had opportunity."

"Well, suppose the landlord to be extinguished, what is to become of him? That's an important question," said the Earl. "You would not surely desire to ruin him?"

Here I ventured to remark, "I do not th nk he would necessarily suffer. Let me suppose a case—suppose an estate of 20,000 acres. This would be let, say for £20,000 or £25,000 a year."

"Far too high, far too high," said the nobleman.

"The necessary charges on this would amount to at least £5,000 a year, so that he cannot rely upon an income of more than £20,000 a year; and that, as Lord Twickenham says, is a high estimate, under existing circumstances.

Now, in the event of his determining to sell, were it in his power to do so, he would receive, say, £400,000—twenty years' purchase. This sum invested in the Colonies at 5 per cent. would bring in a certain £20,000 a year, and the owner would be protected from the chances of political agitation, and he would no longer be obnoxious to a large number of his fellow-countrymen."

"There is something in that," said Lord Hopfield; "but in what way would the farmer benefit by becoming the actual possessor of his farm? Rents are low enough at present, and yet he cannot live."

"Allow me," I continued, "to put before you some figures that recently came into my hands—a small farm of 300 acres, let for 30s. an acre, with about £100 charges paid by the landlord. The landlord received a clear £350 a year. Suppose the farmer to give £25 an acre for the farm, the price would come to £7,500. The yearly value of this sum in this country on such security would be £225 a year. Add to this the hundred pound charges which the farmer would now pay, and he would gain by the transaction a clear £25 a year. So that it would pay him, even under the circumstances supposed, to become the owner of his estate, and the probability is that he would obtain it for much less than the amount supposed."

"But even if he gets his farm, I see little hope of his making it pay, a result that is essential to both his own and his labourers' improvement. Can you show us how this is to be achieved."

"I will try," said Mr. Grately. "First, I would reduce the charges on land; land is too heavily burdened; it is

weighted with numerous taxes that ought to be distributed over other portions of the community, and thus the cost of production is enhanced."

"I don't see how this is to be remedied," replied Lord Hopfield. "If you can devise a system of taxation that will lighten the burden of the landlord you will deserve well of your country."

"When the land passes to the farmer there will be less difficulty in reducing the charges on land, so let us leave the landlords out of account. Taxation is needed in order to maintain the army and the navy—the defensive forces of England; to pay the police, and to maintain the justiciary" ("And to pay interest on the National Debt," interjected Lord Twickenham). "The National Debt was contracted in the defence of Great Britain, and the extension of her territory; and the interest may justly be regarded as a portion of our defensive expenditure. For all these purposes we need, in round numbers, about £80,000,000 a year. Now let me ask, 'Why do we need an army, a navy, police, magistrates, and judges?' For the protection of life and property; chiefly for the protection of property. Then it is a matter of simple equity that property shall pay the cost of its own protection."

"That is fair enough," assented Lord Hopfield.

"The property so needing protection is worth at this moment something like eleven thousand millions sterling."

"How much?" exclaimed the Earl.

"The accumulated savings of this country must be about eleven thousand millions, land included; land, houses, scrip, shares, notes, Consols, ships, railways, factories, coal mines, etc., which go to make up the whole

of the property which demands protection, may be valued at the amount I have stated. One penny in the pound would yield a vast sum amounting to £14,000,000 a year; and if the value of the property demanding protection in other portions of the empire were included, an equal sum would be realised from them, and such a tax would be paid, not by the poor, or by those seeming to have, but by those who actually have; and they could therefore pay the light tax demanded of them for the protection of their property—all that remained to them after the payment of their just debts or liabilities."

"Why, such a change in the incidence of taxation would be little less than a revolution."

"The tax is equitable, and conforms to the fundamental law of taxation; it reaches those who can afford to pay."

"But how could we ascertain the property-holders?" asked Lord Hopfield, reflectively.

"All property is held by some title. All such titles might be registered, not being legal till they were so registered; and then returns from all public companies, made triennially or oftener, would enable the Government to estimate the actual possessions of any property-holder in the country, and to check the personal returns by mutual comparison. Land would then only bear its fair share in the cost of governing the country; such a tax would be George's one tax, with a difference, a difference which equity demands. Land could be leased at lower rents, having lighter burdens, and the farmer could produce at a lower cost, and compete successfully with foreign production."

"There may be something in it, Grately; but it

requires thinking over. Please go on; I am deeply interested in your ideas, and would like to hear how your scheme, if carried into effect, will benefit the labourer, the class we are anxious to benefit."

"Then let me suppose the farmer to be the owner of his farm. He will be, on this supposition, living on and cultivating his own land. Where there was one proprietor, to revert to the case of the Marquis of Elsford, there are now three hundred proprietors. This is an immense gain to the neighbourhood. More money is expended in the place in consequence. The children of the farmer, now the owner, assist in the cultivation of the farm, which is cultivated to the greatest advantage, so as to bring forth abundantly. There will be increased returns from the farm. I may assume that this increase will exceed £100 a year in each case. That is, there will be £30,000 a year more to expend on the estate; more labourers can be employed, more people will be required to minister to their increased wants; and these, again, will give additional employment. Of course, these advantages will come shortly, all too shortly, I fear; but they will come certainly. And the tendency cityward will be checked."

"Yes; and the moment you withdraw Englishmen from London to the prosperous country, they will be replaced by foreigners from Germany, France, Italy; even the Chinaman is finding his way here. So we shall lessen the poverty of Englishmen, only to be confronted with that of the foreigner. Even if I concede your argument, how do you propose to deal with this problem?"

"Alas!" replied Mr. Grately, "one is reminded that

the whole world is kin, and that if one member suffer all the members suffer with it. But it is our first duty to take care of our own; and, although I am not prepared to advocate the restriction of immigration, yet I would suggest that we have a remedy by that means. Prosperity can only be assured and rest upon a solid basis by the concurrent improvement of the whole world."

"And that," said Mr. Dunstan, "shows the impossibility of the thing. The problem is an insoluble one, and was intended to be so, like so many others. This world is only the training place for another; poverty is one of the conditions—the necessary conditions. As there are king, lords, and commons in the State; bishops, priests and deacons in the Church—equally of divine appointment so there must be upper, middle, and lower classes. Even in heaven there are angels, archangels and Deity; and in ourselves body, soul, and spirit. While society is so constituted there will always be poor, and if only everyone would do his duty in the state of life where it has pleased God to place him, there would be less suffering and more happiness."

The analogy did not touch the argument, yet it served the purpose of one, by withdrawing our attention from the point at issue, and so was a conversational triumph for Mr. Dunstan.

"We ladies have been very attentive, and I suppose we may now offer an opinion upon the subject. What do you say, Lady Smithson?"

"I! Oh, I would say if the poor of our cities can be withdrawn from the miseries of London by putting them upon the land, put them upon the land."

"Mary," exclaimed her husband, "how can you be so absurd? You know that their condition is due to their improvidence—early marriages among the number. How often have I heard you say so."

"Yes, my dear," she replied. "I think a good deal of it is due to such improvident marriages; but their miserable surroundings are responsible for a good deal of their improvidence. Don't you think so, Lady Hopfield?"

"You must know, Sir James, that your wife and I are converts of dear Mrs. Benson, and although I don't go quite so far as my cousin in wishing to see such sweeping changes, yet I would be glad to see the cultivators of the soil more closely identified with it."

"You have not said a word, Granvers," remarked Lord Hopfield, turning to him.

"No; but I can assure you I have listened with profound attention. I am neither a politician, nor an economist, nor a parson; I'm only a simple policeman, and see, as you know, the seamy side of London life, and I have formed a very strong opinion on one point."

"Let us hear it," said our host.

"Well, it's this, that the sooner you politicians devise some means of relieving the pressure of London life the better for the whole of us. That is my opinion, formed by years of experience and observation in my professional career."

"There's a great mystery here; please to explain, Mr. Commissioner."

"I can't say whether there is more poverty now than formerly, but there's enough, God knows, to touch the

hearts and open the purses of the benevolent; but I am sure that there is more crime than formerly, only many things that were formerly regarded as criminal are now winked at and treated with greater leniency. I am not complaining of this greater leniency. It is due, in part, no doubt, to increased sensitiveness to the sufferings of mankind. But there's plenty of bad blood about, and plenty of fierce and foolish speeches are made. We are sitting upon the edge of a volcano, which may flare up at any moment. Or if the gentlemen prefer it, we are walking about in a powder magazine, carelessly smoking our pipes. The number of unemployed is large, of roughs and loafers greater, and a still larger number of vicious and criminal, and nearly all have emancipated themselves from religious influences and restraints. There is an indictment for you! And if only they knew their strength, and had competent leaders, not all the police of London and the soldiers to boot could cope with them. Let me give you an illustration of the kind of teaching that's about. I recently attended, professionally of course, a great mass meeting, during the recent strikes, and heard a speech of great power, which contained such figures of speech as this:—'I would cheerfully,' said the speaker, 'cut the throats of the whole of the aristocracy of England. Better that a few thousands should die than that a whole nation should starve.' And this sentiment was cheered to the echo by six thousand people."

"Horrible!" exclaimed several. "Why did you not arrest him?"

"Because this is England, ladies. But I had a talk with him. He is a well-educated man, was at one of

our universities, and is therefore intelligent. I took the liberty of saying to him, 'Your speech to-night was calculated to do great harm. You went near to incite these people to break the law.'"

"'Well, and why shouldn't I?' he replied. 'The only way they'll ever get their rights is by taking them. Why should gentlemen be allowed to defy the law, and be patted on the back, while the poor are locked up?'

"'The law,' I said, 'is equally for the protection of both rich and poor.'

"'Oh, that's all nonsense. Everybody, with half an eye, can see that that's all moonshine. Look at the clergy. They break the law openly, and snap their fingers at the Queen's judges, and society patronises them, and prime ministers offer them preferments and bishoprics. Why should not those whom they are fond of patronising as their poorer brethren be allowed the same liberty? Whether you allow it or not, we intend to claim it, until we better our condition.'

"There, that will give you some idea of the kind of pabulum on which our London roughs are nourished."

"The man was very ignorant and truculent; a thorough-going Protestant, of course," said Mr. Dunstan.

"As I am," interjected Granvers.

"The clergy he referred to know no law but that of the Spirituality in the discharge of their duties. Spiritual things can only be explained by spiritual personages, specially enlightened by the Holy Spirit. When the Catholic Church speaks the clergy instantly obey. The secular courts have no authority to bind the conscience of the clergy."

"Pardon me," said Mr. Grately, "I think the man was right in that particular. The clergy have set an example of lawlessness which is infectious. We are now reaping the fruits of their defiant attitude in Ireland, among the Dockers, and elsewhere. They openly, many of them, defy the judgments of the Queen's Courts."

"How can a court, such as the Privy Council, composed of unbelieving lawyers, decide what is the law of Christ's Church? The thing is absurd," retorted Mr. Dunstan.

"Excuse me if I differ from you. The law of Christ's Church, so far as it bears upon the clergy of the Church of England, is contained in the Prayer-book, which is a schedule of an Act of Parliament. The doctrines and ritual are contained in propositions, and when a question arises as to the meaning of these propositions, it is not to be solved by some spiritual sense, but by men skilled in the interpretation of documents. When any one's rights are in question, whether he be layman or cleric, Romanist or Protestant, Churchman or Nonconformist, the ultimate appeal must be to the Queen, as the guardian of her people's rights."

"A truce to theology, Arthur. We have had enough," said Lady Hopfield, rising; an example which was followed by all—the ladies and the two clergymen passing out of the dining-room.

After their departure Sir James Smithson remarked: "The Rev. Wilfrid Dunstan would make a capital bishop; a man with such excellent ideas—and he is a great preacher, I hear."

"Yes," replied Lord Hopfield, reflectively; "he's very eloquent, and has done a lot of work in the East-end.

Yes, he would make a capital appointment, so cultured and sound; but he's rather extreme, you know."

This was said reflectively; for Lord Hopfield was a power in the ministry of the day.

CHAPTER XX.

DOWN, EVER DOWN.

Mrs. Benson was not, as the reader has inferred, at Lady Hopfield's. Since her husband's death, a year before, she did not go out. He, a quiet, kindly man, who encouraged his wife in her benevolent work, had been successful in his profession, with the result that his family was well provided for; and his widow, now ten years older, continued to live on in her comfortable home in Winchester Square, and devoted herself to benevolent work and the care of her daughters, now handsome young ladies; Margaret, tall and straight, with grey eyes and fair hair; Sybil, *petite* like her mother, and almost as lovely as her mother must have been at her age. Mary and Sarah Brownell were under the same roof as servants in the household. The sons followed their father's profession. I have not mentioned my old friend, Fred Burton, since we first met him; but he and I were still fast friends. I had introduced him to Mrs. Benson, who was pleased with his boyish humour and merry ways. He was still a Ritualist, though not of the thorough-going

type—was rounding into a liberal Churchman, and was still working in the East-end of London, but longing for a parish of his own.

He was successful in inducing Mrs. Benson to visit Father Fielding's parish and church, and to hear the Rev. Wilfrid Dunstan, with whose sermons she was delighted. His eloquence often beguiled her to take part in a service that was distasteful to her. She preferred, she said, her own plain Church of England service, and her old-fashioned parson, who did not regard the new-fangled clergy with such favour, and complained that they were aggressive both in theology and manners, and lamented that the old character of the English clergy was changing for the worse. The Rev. Wilfrid Dunstan became, too, a visitor at Winchester Square. But I do not think Mrs. Benson was impressed by his *personnel*. She did not say this, but I thought I could infer it from her manner, and what she left unsaid. Still, as an East-end worker, he was welcomed to her benevolent house. Through the presence of Burton and Dunstan, other religious ideas than those which had found favour with the mother affected the children, and, through them, even Mary and Sarah; Sybil and Sarah especially were enraptured with the dramatic and costumed service, as well as enthralled by Mr. Dunstan's eloquence. Mary, however, remained faithful to her old pastor, Mr. Grately, to whom she felt they owed so much. And he, I need not say, was always a welcome visitor at Mrs. Benson's. The day after the dinner at Lord Hopfield's I called on my way to town at Winchester Square, to have a chat with my old friend. The door was opened by Sarah Brownell—tall, dark, and really hand-

some,—in her neat white cap. She bore a striking resemblance to Lady Smithson, even though separated from her by thirty years of age. But increased experience had taught me that extraordinary likenesses between mere strangers were not of unusual occurrence.

Mrs. Benson was at home, and welcomed me with a quiet yet cheerful smile, as she sat in her widow's dress, busied upon some piece of work, her once brown hair now showing streaks of silver. I told her of last night's talk, and deeply interested her in a report of the conversation, and the opinions of the various speakers.

"There is one thing," she replied, "which is, I think, of more immediate importance than economic reform, that is the question of the public-house. It is here that the poor waste their earnings, and inflame themselves for vicious indulgences and crime. The money that should go to the poor mother and children is spent in this unholy traffic. I wish something could be done to diminish temptation from this source. There's the case of poor Mrs. Brownell. Her husband, as you know, has gone from bad to worse; and the fact that his children are earning something that might add to the comfort of the household, is really in his case an incentive to idleness and drink; and yet his wife tells me that he was when they married, indeed for some time after he came to London, quite a sober man, and very industrious. If he were only so now they would be quite comfortable, and she would be a happy woman. Do you think you might speak to him?"

I was afraid I could do no good if I did, but promised to watch for an opportunity.

On my way into town I passed the bye-street in which

the Brownells lived, and thinking of Mrs. Benson's words, I turned into it, resolving to make a call upon Mrs. Brownell. She was a very different woman to-day from what she was ten years ago, hardly looking any older, for comfort and kindness had brought back her youth. The rooms which the family occupied were clean and sufficiently furnished, thanks to her benefactor's assistance, who received every year some £10, sometimes more, from Lady Smithson, to be expended upon the family. The poor woman expressed her pleasure at seeing me, and complained that my visits had been very rare.

"Yes," I replied, "I'm full of business, Mrs. Brownell, but I do not forget you. Your friend Mrs. Benson and I often talk of you, and I sometimes have a chat with your girls about father and mother."

"She is like an angel, sir; I owe everything to you and her. Oh, I don't know, if it had not been for your kindness, what would have become of me; I should have got worse and worse, and the children would have followed. But Mrs. Benson's kind sympathy pulled me back and made me strong to bear even more than sweet Robby's death." At the recollection of her dead child her eyes filled with tears. "And the girls," she continued, "are so nicely placed, and Tom is doing well, and is so fond of his home and his sisters."

At this moment a fine manly lad of sixteen threw open the door, crying out, "How's the mother?" a grateful smile upon his face. "How do you do, sir?" he said, when he saw me, lifting his cap. "I thought you'd be pleased to hear, mother, that I'm to have a rise of a shilling next week; and won't I buy something for you

and the girls! They're the finest girls in London, ain't they, sir?"

"They are very nice-looking, Tom, and what is better, very good girls."

"That they are, sir. Good-bye, mother," said Tom, kissing her, "I'll be home at seven o'clock. Where's father?" said the boy, lowering his voice.

"Out looking for work," responded the mother, in the same tone.

Tom's face was shadowed for a moment as he hastened away.

"Thank God for Tom," said the pleased mother; "he makes up for the loss of the other. I sometimes think it was better for him to go, poor little chap, his death brought us so many kind friends. But I would so much like to see him again, sir, and to know what he is doing, if it was only for a moment."

"Ah, you remember what David said?"

"Yes, sir, yes, sir. 'I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.' I shall not be sorry, except for the children's sake, when I may go to him, for he was my baby, sir."

When I reached the Strand, near Charing Cross I met the husband. He was evidently in a bad way, and had been drinking. Down, down, always down. I recalled the words of Grately, years ago. He was driven by a fiend more terrible than those fabled of old, and found one waiting for him at every corner—indeed, every few yards.

Here was my opportunity. "How are you getting on, Brownell?" I asked.

"Very badly, sir; can't get any work to do, everything is overcrowded."

"Yes," I replied; "I have just seen your wife, and she told me you were out of work; but I fear you make the difficulty greater by too many visits to the public-house."

The man's nature was inflamed by his drinking habits, and the lightest spark kindled it into a blaze. "Who says I drink?" he exclaimed; "and why shouldn't I take something as well as you gentlemen? What right has my wife to go complaining to you?" he asked fiercely.

"She didn't complain at all, my good man; she said not a word, poor thing." Before I could finish my sentence he burst in with:

"I don't want none of your interfering with my wife; you keep away from there; you're too often there; and," his own words had aroused him to a furious jealousy, "and you keep away from my wife; or," and he swore a terrible oath.

I was shocked and disgusted at the man's coarse brutality, but replied quietly, "You've got a good wife, Brownell, and good children; you should make yourself worthy of them," and turned away as he exclaimed:

"Ain't I worthy of 'em? I'll see about that."

I saw him turn into the nearest public-house; and here he drank more, and still more inflamed his already violent nature.

As I was returning home rather late in the afternoon, and passing by the lane in which the Brownells lived, I saw a large crowd gathered about the doors, and people coming and going in hot haste. An undefined fear seized

me, and I hurriedly turned my steps in that direction. Pushing my way through the dense crowd, I reached the door, which was guarded by a policeman who kept the crowd back. My inquiries elicited from him that a murder had been committed; the husband had killed his wife—(my heart gave a great jump)—and after a desperate resistance had been arrested.

"What is the name?" I asked, vainly hoping the terrible fear which seized me was groundless.

"Brownell," replied the man, shortly but respectfully. "Keep back, if you please," and he waived off the crowd.

"The man had been drinking," added he, "but knew what he was about. He's a bad lot, has been going to the bad for some time; an idle, loafing fellow."

Dead! and by the hand of her husband! Only an hour or two since she had spoken so hopefully about the future, and yet with what seemed a prescience of coming death.

To say that Mrs. Benson, to whom I carried the painful news without loss of time, was horrified, is to faintly describe her feelings. She was painfully grieved and much overcome; for she was really attached to her humble friend. She undertook to break the news to the murdered woman's children; and with kind solicitude thought of Tom, asking me to bring him to her house, that he might be with his sisters. Taking a hansom, I went at once to the shop in which the boy was engaged. I saw him actively busied with a customer, his bright, handsome face radiant with cheerful hope, for he was to have a rise next week, and his mother was to be the first to share

in his good fortune. I took his employer aside, receiving a cheerful smile of recognition from Tom as I passed him, and explained in a low tone my painful mission. The man was much concerned, and at once offered to release the lad.

Calling Tom to him, he said, gravely, "This gentleman, Tom, wants you to go with him; I'll attend to the customers. You need not come back to-night, and if you want a day or two's holiday, you may take it."

The lad's face became at once anxious and foreboding, as if he instinctively felt that something serious had happened.

"Is anything the matter, sir? anything happened to father?"

"Yes, my lad," I answered, thinking it best that he should so think. "Yes, and Mrs. Benson wants to see you."

The boy's anxiety lessened visibly, yet he looked grave and thoughtful.

The question had referred, to his father but he was really thinking of his mother.

As soon as we had entered the hansom and were on our way to Winchester Square, I thought it well to prepare him in some measure for what was before him, so I said, "The fact is, Tom, that your mother is seriously hurt, and I thought it well to bring you home."

The boy's grief was infectious.

"What is it, sir? Is she much hurt?"

"I fear she is," I said, laying my hand gently upon the boy's head. His grief burst out anew.

"Let me go to her, it's no use going to Mrs. Benson's. Is she there?"

I replied, "Mrs. Benson, your mother's best friend, wished me to bring you to her, Tom, that's all that I can tell you."

He at once acquiesced, and remained silent till we drove up to Winchester Square.

The door was opened, not by Sarah, but by another servant, and I knew that the painful news had been broken to the daughters of the murdered woman. Here I left Tom, and departed to obtain further information. During the evening I received full particulars of the murder, and learnt that the wretched man was secured and in safe custody.

CHAPTER XXI.

A TOUCH OF NATURE.

Early the next day I went into Mrs. Benson's to make inquiries and consult with her. I learnt that the children, who were all in her house, were prostrate with grief; Tom and Sarah particularly overcome—the latter hysterical. While we sat talking over the sad event, Lady Smithson's carriage drove up to the gate, and the lady herself got out and walked hurriedly up the path to the house, her face blanched and tearful. I thought it best to withdraw, and leave the two ladies to meet alone; so passing out the back way, I stopped to speak to the grief-stricken children

a few consoling words. Their grief broke out afresh, and that of Tom was pitiful to see; for all his future (the future of an untried and hopeful lad) was wrapped up in his mother.

I heard in the evening some particulars of Lady Smithson's visit. She entered Mrs. Benson's sitting-room, her face white and her cheeks tear-stained, and holding out the morning paper she had been reading, exclaimed:

"Is this your friend? Is it true?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Benson, sighing heavily, "too true, too true."

"Oh, how shocking! I had got to quite take an interest in her, poor thing; and the children, what has become of them?"

"They are here with me."

"In this house?" exclaimed the lady. "How kind of you! May I see them?"

Mrs. Benson thought it better not to disturb them at present; so her visitor did not press her request. After a long talk, in a quieter frame of mind, Lady Smithson said she would like to see the body of the murdered woman. She had never seen a dead body; and Mrs. Benson, to whom such sights were all too familiar, offered to accompany her. To avoid unnecessary observation, they thought it better to walk to the by-street. On reaching the rooms where the body of the murdered woman lay, they found a policeman on guard, who, however, admitted them to the room where lay the silent form in death. It was carefully laid out, all traces of blood (she had been struck in the heart) had been removed,

and the head was wreathed with white flowers, whiter even than the dead face; for life seemed to have retouched it as she lay in her white shroud. I need not say that all these compassionate and tender offices were from Mrs. Benson's hand and heart.

Lady Smithson stood and looked long and earnestly on the sleeping face, which, even in death, had a look of her, touched her gently, and suddenly, as if moved by an irresistible impulse, stooped down and kissed her, saying, "Sally," in low tones. Mrs. Benson's kind hand embraced hers as her tears flowed freely; and she whispered, "She was my sister."

"I know," replied her friend, in the same tone, and not another word was spoken.

Murder, unfortunately, is no uncommon thing, and although it always attracts considerable attention, yet, unless invested with special characteristics, is soon forgotten. There was nothing unusual in the murder of a tried and patient wife by a drunken husband, and so the murder of Sarah Brownell was only the talk of a day. The interest in it was revived again when the murderer was put upon his trial, and an abstract of the evidence published. His conviction was a foregone conclusion, and his sentence—the death sentence — followed as a matter of course. So, too, did his execution, although some slight effort was made, for the sake of his children, to get his sentence commuted. There was nothing really to be said in favour of commutation except the fact of his having been drinking; and that was no excuse.

Before the sentence was carried into effect, I, at Mrs. Benson's request, and in accordance with my own feelings,

saw Brownell in the condemned cell. He was deeply penitent, and acutely realised the shame and misery he had brought upon himself and his children. Referring to his wife, he said, "Oh, sir, she was a good wife to me and a good mother to the children. But the cursed drink did it. I loved my wife as dearly as anyone can love his wife, my children too, although I was a bad father when I was on the drink. Little did we think, Sarah and I, twenty years ago, when we first kept company down on the Wiltshire farm, that it would end in this: she murdered by her husband, and me ending my days on the gallows. Please, sir, be kind to the two girls, and give an eye to Tom. I'd like to see them if they will come to me."

I consulted with Mrs. Benson about this request, and we agreed to recommend the children to see their father. They were permitted to see him, and took a painful farewell of the wretched man the day before he was executed.

Tom was apparently stupefied with grief; nor did he recover as time went on. One morning his sister Mary got a letter from him, telling her that he could not remain any longer in London; that he was going to sea, if he could get any captain to take him; and that he would never forget her and Sally, to whom he sent his love, but would come back to England soon, and take them away to a new world. This was the substance of his letter. Mary never got another. It had been Lady Smithson's intention to send him to school, and give him a good education, for he had plenty of ability, but her action had been delayed for necessary reasons. She and Mrs. Benson conferred

together about the two girls, and agreed that as they were now grown up, they had better not be disturbed by a knowledge of their relationship to the former lady. She was still, although a kind-hearted woman, a woman of the world, and shrank from having herself canvassed by the gossips of the city. She made peace with her conscience, however, by presenting her nieces with her cast-off clothing and an occasional sovereign.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE REV. WILFRID DUNSTAN.

INCREASING knowledge of the Rev. Wilfrid Dunstan did not improve my opinion of him. He was eloquent certainly, and had considerable ability of a kind, yet when I was in a position to test it, his knowledge was superficial. He had a way of putting his best fruit in his windows, and impressed people accordingly. But this perhaps we all do in some degree. My objection to him was of an undefined character, springing from an unformulated sense of the insincerity of his nature. He was all things to all men, except those whom he scornfully described as Protestants [illegible] Puritans. He was a pleasant man of the world, slightly restrained by clerical dignity, with young ladies, and won their hearts by his sweet condescension. He was a priest a very Hildebrand among clergymen; a statesman and politicians; but he was the Rev. Wilfrid Dunstan with[illegible]

I was yet to see him in a new character with Mrs. Benson. He was in all respects a striking contrast to Fred. Burton, who was full of human sympathies, and withal bright and jovial in manner. Black coat or no black coat, he was the Fred. Burton of old, warm-hearted and impulsive; and was a favourite even with those who laughed at his opinions. He was as open as the day, and yet had some clerical reserve which sat incongruously upon him. Nothing was incongruous in the Rev. Wilfrid Dunstan. I was impressed by this on one occasion when I met him at Mrs. Benson's, where he was a frequent visitor, some months after the unfortunate event just related. While Mrs. Benson and myself were having a quiet talk about her late husband, in one part of the drawing-room, Mr. Dunstan was lightly chatting with her daughters in another, quoting for their benefit, Tennyson, Shelley, William Morris, and even Byron. Something from the Holy Grail was quoted—

> "Sweet brother, I have seen the Holy Grail,
> For, waked at dead of night, I heard a sound,
> As if a silver horn from o'er the hills,
> Blown."

And this led to some talk about the holy nun by whom the Divine vision was seen.

"Oh, tell us," said Sybil, "about sisterhoods; I should so much like to visit one and see the good sisters, and talk with them."

"They are an association of devout women, under the sanction of the Church, who live together as one family under a reverend mother, and devote their lives to good

works. Have you never visited a sisterhood? I shall be pleased to get you an introduction to one."

Mrs. Benson's attention was aroused, for she was very jealous for religious liberty, and held strong opinions about the sanctity of the ordinary duties of life. Mr. Dunstan continued:

"They have much time for prayer and meditation and fasting, and attain to greater degrees of holiness than is possible under other circumstances."

"Excuse me, Mr. Dunstan," remarked Mrs. Benson, 'but are not those other circumstances of God's appointment? And may they not be the conditions under which we are to perfect our character?"

"Yes, for some people, no doubt. All cannot become sisters; but the existence of a class of women, solemnly separated from the world, and devoted to good works, benefits even these. How much do we all owe to their perpetual sacrifice of prayer offered, even while the rest of the world is sleeping? And, sometimes exceptional degrees of holiness and privilege are reached. And that fact is an incentive to others to reach out after higher and better things. I knew of one saintly woman—a sister—who, after much fasting and prayer, had the privilege of seeing her Divine Lord. It was beautiful to see her face."

"How wonderful and glorious!" exclaimed Sybil; "it was like a miracle."

"It was a miracle," replied the grave ecclesiastic.

"How charming to be a sister!" she replied.

"You are a sister, Sybil, my dear, and a daughter too, and have a great many other sisters in the world around you besides Margaret. God has given us these relation-

ships, they are of His appointment, and we need not doubt, therefore, that they if rightly used are really Divine agents in our improvement. To learn to do our part in the world as children, sisters, and friends; to bear the trials that come to us from the characters and tempers of those around us—this is God's own way of making us holy. If we take ourselves out of these relationships where He has placed us, and fly from the world to avoid its duties and trials, we are acting selfishly."

"You do not forget," said Mr. Dunstan, "that He Himself has said that a man must leave his father and mother; and unless a man hate his father and mother, his wife and children and friends, he cannot be His disciple."

"And if the love of our children and friends *does* come into conflict with His services, we must subdue it; and when duty requires us to forsake them, we must obey. Dr. Livingstone did this, acting under high impulse. But Christ Himself lived in all the relations of life. He ate, drank, and accepted invitations to dinner, even to a party (the wedding-party); He lived a true human life, and did not, like John the Baptist, gain a character for sanctity, by separating Himself from the world."

"But He was Divine; that which was safe for Him is no example for us, full of infirmities as we are."

"But we do not lose these infirmities by forsaking the world. They still cling to us, and the divinely-appointed means of correcting them—the relationships of life—are lost to us. Hence they often grow apace, as in the case of à Becket and many of the great ecclesiastics."

"Oh, madam, that is mere Protestant history, which presents these great men in such an odious light."

"We must read 'Clerical History,'" I said lightly, "if we would see the true and elevated characters of à Becket, Alexander VI., and the monks and nuns of the suppressed houses." Mr. Dunstan did not vouchsafe an answer to my remark.

"You would not, I am sure," he said, turning to Mrs. Benson, "deny that the sisters are living unselfish lives, and are doing much good among the poor."

"Certainly not," she replied. "People may live good lives under most adverse circumstances; but I believe it would be better for the women themselves—would correct their narrowness—and better for the world in general, if they brought their good influences to bear upon the world as mothers and sisters and friends.

"I would have everyone free: free to live in community, whether in sisterhoods or in family life; free to live in solitude. Each person must be free to form and develop her character according to her own deliberate opinions. But what I contend against is that solitude and sisterhoods (which cut women off from healthy association with God-given relationships) furnish the conditions most favourable to usefulness and holiness. In my judgment the conditions most conducive to both are family and social relationships. They are of Divine appointment, and we may not lightly withdraw ourselves from them. The craze for a separated life is not Christian, although Christians may be, occasionally, carried away by it. Christ lived in the midst of such relationships, and lived His perfect life. The state of celibacy is not holier than the marriage

relation—is not so conducive to holiness as that relation; is on a lower level, and is lower toned than the family life. Experience confirms this opinion; history discloses innumerable and shocking evils arising from the violation of God's order; and they are of the essence of the system from which they spring. This is my deliberate opinion."

"Do you know," I remarked, "that I have sometimes thought it would be better for all if the clergy were not a class apart? although, in the Church of England, the separation is very slight, as they enter into family relations, and thus connect themselves with the rest of the world."

"That, my dear sir, is rank Plymouthism. Every man with that sect is a minister, Tom, Dick, or Harry, and if it became universal, Christianity would die out of the world. The clergy are the Christian army, fighting the battles of Christ under their Divine leader."

"Experience has shown us, both in America and Germany, that citizen soldiers can give a good account of themselves; and so you may depend upon it would the Christian Church, even if ministers, as a separate class, were to come to an end. I am not advocating this, but think, if it were possible, the world would gain by the change."

"The world would relapse into heathenism," said Mr. Dunstan, emphatically.

"And yet," remarked Mrs. Benson, "we are taught to look forward to a time when they shall no more teach every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord, for all shall know Him'; when the people shall be all righteous."

"Yes, when that time comes, and not before, the

clergy will not be needed, and until then both clergy and sisterhoods are a necessity."

"Well, good men and women, and followers of Christ are a necessity, and for the sake of order it is well that suitable men should be set apart to conduct Divine worship and stir the hearts of the people to duty and worship and love."

"I would like," said Mr. Dunstan, rising, "to speak to one of your maids, if I may; I think her name is Sarah Brownell; I have seen her in church, and she has come to me for advice. She seems to be in trouble."

"Yes, poor child, she has been in great trouble ever since her mother's death; she has never got over it. It is very kind of you. I will send for her. Perhaps you would like to see her alone."

"It is really very kind of Mr. Dunstan to speak to her. How keenly he interests himself in his people!"

"How delightful it would be," said Sybil, "to be a sister; and to be able always to be doing good!"

Her mother smiled. "Yes, dear, but you *are* a sister; and can always be doing, or trying to do good,' she added with a sigh.

"I would like to be a mother, like the dear good mother," said Margaret, kissing her mother on the forehead, and stroking her rapidly whitening hair.

"I am quite sure that Mr. Dunstan has no sister to compare with you. Only think of all you do, not only for us, but for the poor; and yet no one praises the good mother; it's always the good sister, the good sister," exclaimed the girl lightly, caressing her mother.

"I don't like the sisters' dresses, they are so horrid."

said Sybil, reverting to the conversation. "But it must be a very holy life."

"And do you think, my dear, that by merely changing your dress you change your nature? Under the sisters' dress (which is not always horrid) the same infirmities and evil passions that are natural to the human heart may exist, and often do exist. Not long ago there was a great case in which your dear father was engaged, in which a woman who had been a nun brought an action against the reverend mother, as the superior is called, and a great deal of evidence was given by various persons connected with the convent, priests and nuns, and it all served to show that under the 'narrowing nunnery walls,' supposed to shut out the world and its spirit, there was just as much bad temper and petty selfishness as in the world outside; and sometimes indeed worse things occur. Many dreadful scandals have come to light, proving that human nature, evil human nature, is as strong within those quiet walls and under those thick veils as anywhere else; indeed, when people take themselves out of God's order and all the disciplinary relations of life, such things are to be expected."

"But the Ritualists do a lot of work among the poor, don't they?" inquired Margaret.

"Some do, I daresay, for there are earnest men and women among all religions, and even many of those who acknowledge none are earnest. They have a way of keeping themselves, as your father would say, in evidence; but publicity is not the same thing as work."

"I know something about that," I said, laughing, "for many paragraphs that never see the light come to me.

You remind me of the story of an able but eccentric Irish clergyman, who was one day discussing with a friend the great work done by the Ritualists. 'Well, you can't deny that they exercise a great influence, you hear of them everywhere.' 'And,' said the Irishman, 'do you ever hear of me?' 'No,' replied his friend, 'except of course in this place.' 'Well, if I were to become a Ritualist, you would hear of me to-morrow all over England!' There are thousands of quiet clergymen whose names are not known beyond their own parishes, and tens of thousands of mothers and sisters, all over England, equally unknown, who are doing ten times as much benevolent work as all your fussy Ritualists and sisterhoods put together."

"I agree with you," Mrs. Benson said, heartily.

As I rose to leave, Fred Burton was announced, so I waited a few minutes longer.

He came in with a rush, and after shaking hands in his cordial way, exclaimed, "I'm so glad to find you in, for I have tickets for one of our functions; I want you to come and bring your daughters; or if you can't come, to place them under my charge, for I am a staid fellow, you know, and I'll take them and bring them back safe and sound."

The girls were delighted, and I left them settling the matter with their mother.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SARAH BROWNELL.

Some weeks after this rather polemical conversation, I received, while at my somewhat late breakfast, a note from Mrs. Benson, asking me to call on her.

The tone of the note was urgent, so concluding my breakfast, I hastened round to Winchester Square. I found her pacing her sitting-room anxiously.

"I am so thankful you have come, and am grateful to you for coming so promptly. I am greatly distressed; Sarah has been out all night, and has not yet returned."

This was startling news, ; for we had known her since she was a child, and had taken much interest in her. She with her sister had been treated like one of Mrs. Benson's family; so that her unaccountable absence was almost as shocking as that of one of her own daughters would have been.

Sarah had gone out in the evening on some pretext, telling her sister not to be alarmed if she was late.

"I myself," said Mrs. Benson, "had gone early to bed. Mary sat up for her sister, and was startled, on looking at the time, to find it twelve o'clock. She then began to be alarmed, yet did not like to disturb me, thinking too that Sarah might return at any moment. So poor girl she passed the night in the greatest anxiety. It was only at seven o'clock this morning that I heard of Sarah's absence. Inquiries were made immediately at the houses of her

several friends; but no explanation is forthcoming of her mysterious absence. So I took the liberty of sending for you, that I might advise with you as to the best course to be taken."

I asked to see Mary, who came into the room pale and tear-stained, her eyes swollen with weeping. She was sure that Sarah had been murdered. I comforted her on this score, although I did not myself feel the confidence which my words expressed. While I was trying to elicit the names of Sarah's personal friends, a roll soon exhausted, for the sisters were more reserved than other girls of their station, the post brought a letter for Mary. It was in Sarah's handwriting, and was from her. It was very short and cautiously worded.

"DEAR MARY,—I am very happy. Do not trouble about me. I am sorry to give you pain, but you will be glad that I am happy. I would like to thank Mrs. Benson and the young ladies for all their kindness.—Your affectionate sister, Sarah."

That was the whole of the letter. I looked at the postmark; it had been posted in the City. Mary's first feeling was one of relief.

"She is alive then!"

It was now apparent that the poor girl was entangled in some connection of a disreputable nature. Hence the secret of her late depression. So much I inferred from the terms of her short note. Mrs. Benson was even more distressed than at the thought of the girl's death, and resolved to make every effort to discover her. After talking the case over, I suggested that I might take Mr. Granvers into our confidence on the subject. To this course

Mrs. Benson agreed. When I stated the case to Granvers, to which he listened carefully, he said:

"The girl has got entangled with some gentleman, probably a married man. Such things happen every day. It is from this class chiefly that the unfortunate class gets its recruits, and they cannot be fewer than two or three thousand a year in London alone. It will be extremely difficult to find her, for there is no place like London to hide in. But I will do whatever can be done, both for the poor girl's sake and that of her mistress, whom I very much respect, and whose good works I know well. Has anyone a photograph of her?"

"Yes, I know Mrs. Benson had one."

"Well, let me have it, and I will see what can be done. Is anyone suspected?"

"No."

"Who are her and her sister's friends?"

"They have but few."

"Where did she go to church?"

"Usually to Mrs. Benson's church, St. George's, but she knew no one attending there. Sometimes she went to that of the Rev. Wilfrid Dunstan"—(so Father Feilding's Church was known).

"Did she know anyone there?" asked the Inspector quickly.

"I don't think so; but Mrs. Benson will inquire; perhaps Dunstan can give her some information."

"Did he know her?"

"Yes; he knew, too, that she was in some trouble." And I related the incident at Mrs. Benson's the last time I had met Dunstan there.

"Something may come out of this," he remarked; "but we must be very careful with the Reverend Wilfrid."

Mr. Dunstan could throw no light upon the case, so he wrote (being unable to call) in reply to Mrs. Benson's letter. Sarah had come to him in great trouble, and he had advised her; but what he had learned being under the seal of the confessional he could not reveal. He was deeply grieved for the poor girl, and sympathised with Mrs. Benson in her anxiety and trouble.

"A sympathetic letter; but I never heard of her going to confession. Strange! What could have taken her there; and why conceal the fact from me?"

There was something to be explained here.

To her inquiries on this head Mr. Dunstan replied that he was not aware that Sarah had withheld the knowledge of the fact that she used the sacrament of penance. Of course *he* could not speak of it.

"That seems reasonable enough; and yet, knowing that I was in the place of her dead mother, it would naturally occur to him to talk with me about the course she was pursuing. Surely, if one of my own daughters should go to him to advise with him periodically, it would be his duty to make me acquainted with the fact."

Mrs. Benson felt very strongly on this point, and expressed herself in language of equal strength. "Creeping into houses," she said, "like those of old, leading captive silly women, laden with divers sins."

She expressed herself in this way in the presence of her daughters. Sybil's face coloured deeply, and she seemed uneasy, and left the room as soon as she could.

In the evening of the same day, when her mother was alone, Sybil came to her, and said:

"I have something to tell you, mother. Oh, I'm so sorry; I've been very wicked!" she exclaimed, throwing herself on her knees at her astonished mother's feet, and sobbing violently.

Mrs. Benson was agitated by this outburst, but restraining herself, she softly smoothed the hair of the sobbing Sybil, and waited, saying, "What is it, dear? There!"

The child's paroxysm exhausted itself; and she said in a low voice:

"I went to confession, and I am afraid that I took poor Sarah with me, and—and——." She burst out again.

"Tell me all, my dear," said her mother, soothingly.

"And I felt so wicked."

"It was wrong, dear, to take such a step without consulting me, but do not blame yourself too much. There is no harm done yet."

"Oh, I didn't mean that. Of course, it was wrong to do so without your consent, but Mr. Dunstan persuaded me, and—and told me that a confession was made to God, and should not be spoken about to anyone, not even to a parent. This quieted my conscience; but I did not know how wicked I was until I went to him. It was as if he opened a door whose existence I didn't even suspect; and then I saw my heart full of horrid wickedness; and the oftener I went, the more wicked I seemed to become. He put such searching questions."

"Yes, dear, and those questions created the very wickedness they revealed. We are all full of selfishness;

and that selfishness may show itself in any particular form. By constantly dwelling, in our thoughts, upon some particular form of evil, it grows and develops within us."

"But he said it was all forgiven, when I had told him all; but it got stronger and stronger; and had it not been for poor Sarah, I might have gone on, and got at last to be——" here her words failed her.

Her mother replied, "The whole thing, dear, is wrong, is not God's way. A wise and good man has said that for every look we take at ourselves, we should take ten looks at Christ. This is true wisdom. A man who wishes to paint a picture, or sculpture a likeness, studies the *perfect* form of that which he wishes to reproduce. If he lived among diseased and imperfect forms, his work would be diseased and imperfect. A Christian wishes to grow like Christ, into a 'perfect man'; and so he studies, contemplates Him, not his own sinful heart. 'Looking unto Jesus' is the Christian's motto—not searching into the dim and darkened recesses of his own bosom."

"Oh, I am so glad I have told you, mother! You forgive me, don't you?"

"Yes, dear; and you will always take your mother into your confidence in future?"

"Yes, yes, dear; and this is the last confession," she said, smiling in her tears, "that I will ever make, I hope."

I need not say that this incident terminated the Rev. Wilfrid Dunstan's intercourse at Winchester Square.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SUSPICIONS.

TWELVE months passed away bringing no tidings of the missing girl. Mrs. Benson was deeply affected by the failure of our efforts to trace her. The two sisters had been treated by her more as companions than servants; and, after the knowledge of their relationship to Lady Smithson, had been treated with even greater consideration, and induced to improve themselves.

Granvers had not, however, given up hope. He said to her, "I have given the most careful attention to the case, and I am not without some hope that I have discovered a slight trace that may lead to something; only," he added, "the least whisper that I have one might lead to its loss—so, please, do not breathe a word to anybody —not even to your children."

This he repeated to me with a like caution. About this time a paragraph appeared in one of the papers that the Government intended to appoint to a vacant bishopric a well-known and eloquent clergyman, who had laboured long and devotedly in the East-end of London. The allusion was obviously to the Rev. Wilfrid Dunstan; and the next morning he was specifically named as the probable recipient of the honour. While sitting at breakfast the same morning, I was surprised to receive a visit from Fred Burton, who had hardly entered my room before he asked, excitedly,

"Have you seen that paragraph; is it true?"

"To which of all the numerous paragraphs does your question refer?" I asked.

"About Dunstan," he replied.

"Yes," I answered; "I suppose it's true; and you are jubilant, of course."

"On the contrary," he replied; "I think it would be the scandal of the age if it was made. It cannot be made; it shan't be made!" he cried excitedly.

"What does all this mean, my dear fellow?" I asked seriously, for his energy surprised me.

"It means that he's a scoundrel, and ought to be turned out of the Church. I know what I know; but for the Church's sake I have not spoken to a soul, not even to you. I am sure," he said in a lower voice, "that he had something to do with the disappearance of Sarah Brownell."

It was my turn to get excited; for Fred's words lighted up several isolated facts in Sarah's history and connected them.

"But," I said, "you must be very careful, my dear fellow, for the Church's sake, if for no other reason. Things may look suspicious, and yet there may be nothing in them."

"That's true, Graham, of course; but I have seen the girl coming out of his rooms at night. I met her one evening just before she disappeared."

"Well, that proves nothing. She was in trouble; and we know—he has told us—that she consulted him."

"Look here, Graham, I speak to you as my oldest friend in London; and I tell you what I would not tell my own brother—or confessor even. I have heard confessions,

and I know something of their effect, even upon oneself. To hear from the lips of a beautiful woman a confession of guilty passion; to probe her by the aid of 'Dens,' 'Liguori,' and other text-books inspired by them, as the 'Priest in Confession,' until all her heart is laid bare before you, is, I assure you, worse than walking in pestilent air. And only the mighty grace of God can keep one from falling under such circumstances. Many do fall, and drag their fair penitents deeper into the slough of passion and sin. I have often doubted whether the whole thing is not a mistake, and half resolved to wash my hands of it. Now, there is no clergyman more popular with women than the handsome and fascinating Dunstan; and, knowing him, you can judge whether his saintly character will stand him in good stead under the circumstances I have mentioned. I have had my suspicions of him for years; and he tried, too, to get hold of Sybil, and my tongue was tied; but I can stand it no longer; the thing shall not go on. But not a word of this to a living soul."

"All professions, Fred, have their special temptations. Clergymen (like doctors), whether they hear confessions or not, are beset by moral temptations; it would be well for all concerned if the fact were more distinctly recognised."

Fred's suspicions startled me; yet I felt ready to accept them. His love for Sybil—for I knew he loved her—had roused him to speak; perhaps it had made him credulously suspicious.

I resolved cautiously to sound Granvers on the subject of Dunstan. The moment I mentioned his name he

got up, and closing the door of his room, said, "The very man I suspect." "But why?" I asked. "Well, you see, reports from all parts of London pass through my hands; and when a man is seen under certain circumstances, all tending one way, again and again, times without number, one gets an uncomfortable sense that all these circumstances imply something, and that something, in the case of our friend, is not pleasant. But he is a cunning fellow, so I have to work like a mole; yet I have a trace, that is all that I can say." A few days later another name was announced for the vacant bishopric, and to the possessor of this name the bishopric was given, much to the disappointment of the Rev. Wilfrid Dunstan's friends, and, I suspect, greatly to his own chagrin.

CHAPTER XXV.

ANONYMA.

About a week after my talk with Granvers I was surprised to receive an early visit from him, and anticipated news of Sarah Brownell.

"You are right, Graham; I have news of the girl, I believe. One of my scouts saw her a few days ago, at a house in St. John's Wood. He was quite certain that he

recognised her—for he had her photograph—going into the place. To make assurance doubly sure I put on another to watch the place, and he also identified her, so there is little doubt that we have run her down at last."

"This will be happy news for Mrs. Benson," I said.

"I am not so sure of that, for the woman she is with is not a good specimen, even of her class. However, we will do all we can for the recovery of the poor girl; and I thought you would not object to join me in a visit of reconnaisance before reporting our discovery to her."

"Certainly," I said, "if you think I shall be of any use."

So, taking a hansom, we drove to St. John's Wood, and drew up some distance from the house indicated. On entering we were introduced to Mrs. Johnson, a plain-looking, highly-dressed woman, not of pleasant appearance or manners. The commissioner stated the purpose of our visit. Mrs. Johnson was surprised. She knew no girl of the name given.

"She may have, and very probably has, changed her name," said Granvers, producing her photograph. "This is a likeness of her. She is a striking-looking girl, as you see."

"Yes, and I can assure you I have seen her for the first time. I do not know her, and cannot therefore help you."

Her manner was constrained and slightly defiant: nothing could be done with her, so we took our departure. As we walked towards our hansom Granvers said,

"Someone has rounded on me, or, at any rate, she has come to know that the place has been watched, and has

sent the girl away. We shall get nothing out of her, I fear."

By this time we were entering our ransom.

"By Jove! I have it," and giving some instructions to the driver, who immediately turned his horse's head in another direction, he threw himself back in the cab without another word. In a few minutes we drew up before a large, well-built, even magnificent mansion, lying back in well-kept grounds. I looked at my friend in surprise.

"Come along," he replied to my look, "and take particular notice of the lady I'm going to introduce you to."

A uniformed flunkey promptly opened the door, and showed us into a large, well-furnished room. The furniture was of a rich description; the pictures on the wall—valuable paintings—of a voluptuous character; the books—in a couple of small, pretty bookcases—well bound. Poems of all kinds, novels by Scott, George Eliot, Ouida, and other well-known authors; and what are vaguely called French novels. Such was the character of the literature.

A well-preserved lady of about forty-five entered the room with a pleasant smile and an easy bow.

"Mr. Granvers," she said, extending her hand.

"You know me, do you?" he inquired.

"I know," was the response, "everybody in London worth knowing."

"Thank you," he answered, laughing. "Let me, Mrs. Allies, introduce another gentleman worth knowing—Mr. Graham, of the *London Express*."

"I have heard of Mr. Graham, but have not had the

pleasure of meeting him yet. I hope this will not be the last time."

I hastened to express my thanks, and to say that I did not go out very much.

"A mistake, I assure you. Young men like you should see the world while you can enjoy it."

So she rattled on easily, like a woman of the world.

Presently the commissioner said, "I have a favour to beg of you, Mrs. Allies; and, knowing you to be a good-natured woman, I anticipate a favourable reply."

"Thank you; compliment for compliment. Please let me know what it is."

Granvers proceeded to explain the case of Sarah Brownell and the fruitless expedition of the morning.

When she heard of this our hostess laughed, and said, "Ah, you will get nothing from Mrs. Johnson. So you want me to help you. Have you a likeness of the girl?"

"Yes; here is one," he replied, handing the photograph to her.

She examined the likeness attentively, and remarked, "She is certainly a fine girl. Don't you think you are making a mistake to interfere with her? She is on the highway to fortune."

The coolness and deliberation of the suggestion astonished me. Granvers explained her relation to Mrs. Benson, and that lady's great anxiety to recover her.

"Well," she remarked, after a long pause, "I will help you, and do my best; there are as fine fish in the sea as ever were caught."

At this moment two young ladies entered the room, to whom we were introduced. They became immediately

chatty and agreeable, if not free in their behaviour towards us. They talked Tennyson, Morris, Swinburne, and showed themselves acquainted with light modern literature. I was quite interested, and almost regretted when Granvers rose to leave.

While I was passing into the hall Mrs. Allies drew Granvers aside for a little private talk, leaving me to the care of the two young ladies, who struck me now as *not* being quite young ladies.

When my friend joined me, and while we were walking out of the grounds, he said, "Do you know what the old lady wanted me for? She asked if you were sweet upon the girl that we are seeking. She can't understand a man taking an interest in such a case without having ulterior motives."

"Of course you disabused her?"

"Of course, of course. What do you think of her?"

"To tell you the truth, I am puzzled on all sides."

He laughed, and asked, as we got into our cab, "What age do you suppose she is?"

"About forty-five."

"She is at least ten years more than that. She has had a remarkable career. She is the daughter of a washerwoman, and that house is all her own. She was exceedingly pretty, and very early came under the protection of Lord Blythsdale. So infatuated was he with her that he actually took her to live near the seat of the family, who were awfully scandalised. This was nearly forty years ago. After his marriage she passed to one of the leading public men of England. Her name is not Allies, but Jemima Alley. So she is, or used to be, vulgarly known

as Sally in our Alley. He must have given her a handsome allowance, for she is very rich. But then she was a perfect Madame Vestris. Some few years ago her second protector got married to a dowager countess, who was very active in the religious world, and pensioned off Mrs. Allies. She then bought the handsome mansion where she now lives."

"Did the countess know of her existence?"

"Bless you, yes; everybody knew. Here she entertains very liberally, and receives some of the principal magnates of the land. She has a dinner party to-night, which will include some names that would astonish you. She has educated herself; and by contact with well-mannered people, has got those ways that you have had a taste of. She is really very good-natured. Old as she is, you would hardly credit what I am going to tell you; but I can vouch for its truth. Quite recently she got a young fellow in tow—nephew of Lord Crackthorpe—hardly twenty-one, and made him an allowance. Lord Crackthorpe was badly cut up by it. So some of his friends, who had influence with her, went to her and represented the facts. Upon hearing which she dismissed the young fellow, who was promptly sent abroad by his uncle." I was astounded. "Oh, there are many cases like it; but certainly hers is the most remarkable that has ever come under my knowledge."

The story of the commissioner, coupled with the morning's experience, set me thinking.

"Do you know," I presently asked, "much of this class of people?"

"A good deal comes to the knowledge of the police, as

you may imagine. The class is recruited from all ranks and conditions of life. The divorce court is responsible for a good many, of a certain class. Some plunge into the life because they like it. Social restraints diminish more and more; and some women, well brought up, like the life. The greatest number come, as you may imagine, from the class of shop girls, barmaids, and domestic servants; but all classes pay tribute to it."

"And what becomes of them ultimately?"

"They have various endings. Some marry and settle in the colonies, or lead a quiet life in London. I have known two or three who married well, and have been presented at Court. In these cases they had led a quiet kind of life, and when they married were introduced as ladies from Australia or America—usually, however, from the Continent, where they were the daughters of foreign noblemen. But the fact is, that I have known some who have run the gauntlet of the Lord Chamberlain, and been presented. Some save money and reform, settling down quietly and living a respectable, and even at times a religious, life. Why should they not? men sometimes do so. But the number who escape from the life is as a drop in the ocean in comparison with those who pursue it to the bitter end—the terrible end. If you choose to visit certain streets between eleven and twelve o'clock at night, you would get some faint idea of the number and character of those who lead this awful life. All, nearly all, drink—they could not pursue their calling otherwise; and go down steadily, and with ever increasing force. The bottom of the ditch is soon reached. They are old before they are forty; but they go down,

always down, from bad to worse, while others step into the broken ranks. I could tell you many a painful tale of cases that have come under my own personal observation.

"One morning, some years ago, very early in the late spring, I was going home after a night at work. As I passed Hanover Square I saw a woman lying under the shelter of the trees there. I stopped to look at her, and as I was looking she woke and sat up, her grey hair tumbling down upon her shoulders. Poor thing! she had been drinking, but was now perfectly sober. She nodded a pleasant 'Good morning, commissioner. I hope I'm not intruding, this is my dressing-room,' with another laugh. She stood up and shook out her poor wretched-looking skirts. 'I had a much finer one once upon a time; a long time ago,' she quavered. 'Dear me, how time flies!' I spoke kindly to the old woman, whose tone and manner spoke of an experience of better days. I said something to this effect. 'Yes,' she answered, 'your discernment does you credit, commissioner; you must be a gentleman—excuse me.' She laughed again. 'I do not always, I fear, keep good society, so my manners sometimes deteriorate a little, just a little. You would like to know my name. I'm not proud of it; but it may be useful. I am,' she whispered, 'the Countess of Twickenham.' I started back. 'Yes, commissioner, that's my name; but you must keep it a secret. Now I must finish my toilet. So, if you please, say good morning;' and the poor thing ran off. I made inquiries, and found that her story was true. Ever afterwards I took a special interest in her, and often had little talks with her, trying to induce her to give up the life.

Friends, I was sure, would help her, if she would only reform. 'No, no!' she would say, 'with all its miseries I like the life; I have grown to it. One of these days I'll reform, and then I'll send for you.'

"Among her class she was known as the Duchess, and was, at times, very haughty and reserved; but drink, drink kept her down and drove her still lower. The fact is that the life is like the fabled maelstrom, very few that get into it ever get out of it on this side of the grave. The woman I speak of illustrates the case of thousands. One evening, about twelve months since, I was going to a ball in company with Lady Lilias (you saw her at Lord Hopfield's)——"

"Yes, I remember her. I was struck by the beauty of her face and its sad expression."

"Poor girl! she is this woman's daughter; was only a baby when the affair happened that led to the divorce proceedings. Of course she knew nothing of them, and thought her mother was dead. While I was handing her out of the carriage a poor drunken woman staggered up to me and said, 'Lend me a shilling, commissioner. I haven't a bed, so help me ——.' It was my friend of Hanover Square. I waved her aside, but not before she had caught sight of the coronet on the panelling of the carriage. She exclaimed, 'This is Lady Lilias. I'm your mother, child; speak to me, my dear!' The girl looked at the poor drunken creature, and saw something in the face of the poor woman that awakened a response in her heart, for she made a step towards her, which I checked, saying, 'I will see to her; for God's sake, Lady Lilias, leave it to me,' hardly knowing what I said. 'Wait,' I

said to the woman, 'I will come to you in a moment,' and took my charge inside. She was trembling with excitement, and immediately turned to me and cried, 'Is that true, Mr. Granvers?' I put her off, but it was no use; she insisted upon knowing, and when she knew, would have gone back to speak to her; only I represented that such a course would create a scene and do no good; so taking a sovereign—all she had in her purse—she gave it to me for her mother, and made me promise to arrange an interview with her for the next day. While she went into the cloak-room I returned to speak to the wretched woman, whom I found waiting for me, already somewhat sobered and conscious of what she had done. I gave her the sovereign, and added a half-crown on my own account, and told her that her daughter would see her next day, arranging the time and place with her. The poor woman's face brightened, and she went away with a hopeful step. I need not say that Lady Lilias did not dance that night. She was thoroughly upset and soon went home, pleading illness, with the intention of seeing her mother the next day in the afternoon. By the second delivery next morning I got a letter from the Countess, enclosing one for her daughter. That to me asked me to deliver the enclosed to Lady Lilias; and told me that her body would be found at a certain spot in the Thames. While I was reading the letter a policeman reported the finding of the body of a woman near the spot indicated in her letter. The hand of the deceased was tightly closed over a sovereign. The body was that of the ex-Countess. Of course I had to break the news to the unhappy daughter. The mother's letter, which I read,

was touching and penitent. Lady Lilias has never been the same since."

"I could not help noticing the expression of sadness on her face," I remarked.

"Yes; she is a most affectionate and sympathetic young lady," added Granvers, "and I am truly sorry for her. Hundreds of these poor women every year do away with themselves, which is perhaps a better fate than befalls the majority of them."

I was very much interested in and deeply moved by the story; it brought home to me vividly the wretchedness and misery of the life of this class of women.

"But," he continued, "I have spoken merely of the ordinary routine of the life. It is lived in unusual and strange ways little suspected. There are many houses in the West-end where you may meet and have all the excitement of pursuing maids (or those that pass for such) and wives and widows without a suspicion of their belonging to the class. These are houses of convenience, and are visited by gentlemen and ladies of ill-regulated desires and loose habits—ladies, many of them, in society. At such places you would not see, unless you had eyes to see, anything that was inconsistent with decorum or with the behaviour in ordinary drawing-rooms. The outside of the cup and platter is clean, where, however, the other part of the saying holds true. And there is yet another class. A clergyman, a friend of mine, who has a parish in a certain part of London, was surprised to find his congregation to consist chiefly of women—well-dressed, well-mannered women—whose husbands were supposed to be at sea or abroad, and usually absent. He learnt in

time that these were the mistresses of gentlemen of society in London, mostly married men."

"And yet these women go to church?"

"Oh, bless you, yes! Many of them go to church and look as devout as any of the well-bred men under whose protection they are living. And why should they not? It has always puzzled me that while religious bodies seek the support and co-operation of 'fallen men,' and think *their* offence venial, they should look with pious horror upon these poor women, whose chief offence is that they have yielded to the blandishments of the stronger sex. They do not all at once cast themselves off from religious restraints, although, I think, of late years there's not much religious restraint anywhere."

"I fear you are right in both points. The sin is not greater in one case than the other. It is only we men who have stamped it with such an utterly hopeless character in the one case, while we have regarded it as venial in the other. These women drift into the lower stratum, I suppose?"

"Yes, very generally. Some of them marry—and not infrequently marry the men who keep them; others meet with young men who fall in love with them, and, failing otherwise, end by marrying them.

"I have amused myself," he said, "by trying to apply Buckle's method for the purpose of drawing an inference to the unknown quantity of immorality existing in London."

"How? What do you mean?" I asked.

"There is a certain amount of known immorality. The number of women of this class in London is variously

estimated at eighty or a hundred thousand. Here is the known; does it lend us any aid by which the unknown may be inferred? The comparative science of criminal statistics may help us to a startling conclusion. Out of one hundred and twenty murders, or thereabouts, committed in a limited time, how many perpetrators are discovered? Not more than ninety persons are put upon their trial. Of these a considerable number are not convicted. The convictions are about two-thirds—that is, nearly one-half the perpetrators of a crime that is evident and visible, and is regarded with peculiar abhorrence, escape detection. And this in a class of cases which arouses the detective instincts of society. Take the case of theft. The proportion of convictions is much less still. By proceeding in this way, may we not get more than an inkling of the unknown figures we are in search of? Considering the nature of the vice, the secrecy and caution with which it is pursued, may we not be within the mark when we say that the known is to the unknown as one to three, or, at least, one-half—an amazing conclusion, which, let us hope, is quite fabulous. But it is certain that immorality in London has assumed vast proportions, for both sexes must be included in the estimate."

The inspector's suggestion was indeed appalling. He continued, "I regret to say that, Buckle or no Buckle, I believe there is a very large amount of immorality in London. You see, the life of excitement which most people who can afford it live is responsible for it. Too often those checks and counterpoises, which were intended to be restraining, are absent. A sense of honour, religion, love of children, employment, temperament, these are the

restraining influences which check the growth and advance of those evil tendencies which the social round develops in all classes. And you may judge for yourself the number who are likely to be restrained by these motives. In one class of society at least there is a special element of danger —the number of rich, or comparatively rich, unmarried men; although the chief mischief is not confined to the unmarried class. It is part of the excitement of their life to be in pursuit of some woman. And one unpleasant fact is of great significance—the unwillingness of men who have been dishonoured to sue for divorce. This is, in the cases I am contemplating, due to the pressure of social opinion. A man who takes such a step (unless in very exceptional cases) is regarded with dislike; and social ostracism may follow—has actually followed, in well-known cases. So many a man winks at things rather than face the ostracism of society by prompt and honourable action. Thus the danger which King Arthur feared is found in the society of to-day.

> 'I hold the man the worst of public foes
> Who, either for his own or children's sake,
> To save his blood from scandal, lets the wife
> Whom he knows false, abide and rule the house.
> . . . . .
> She, like a new disease, unknown to men,
> Creeps, no precaution, used among the crowd,
> . . . Saps
> The fealty of our friends.
> And poisons half the young.'

And thus the children of the nation are corrupted, and the nation is poisoned in its cradle.

"Here we are at the yard. Come in and have a glass of wine to wash all this talk out of your mouth."

"No, thank you; I never take wine. I'll go on to the office."

"Perhaps you are right. I could hardly get through my work without an occasional glass. I think our friend will help us, and expect soon to hear from her; in which case you will see me at your rooms some morning."

CHAPTER XXVI.

FOUND AND LOST.

I WAS not surprised, about a fortnight later, to get a note from Granvers, saying he had news for me of importance, and asking me to call at his office, as he was exceptionally busy. On entering his office he welcomed me with a smile, and handed me a note, saying, "Read that." It was from Mrs. Allies, and was written in a firm, womanly style. I read aloud:

"MY DEAR MR. GRANVERS,—For I am not writing to you professionally, but as a friend."—("She's a cunning beggar, but extremely good-natured," commented Granvers.)—"I have taken a good deal of trouble to oblige you, my dear, and hope you are properly grateful, but you see I never could resist the fascinations of your

wicked sex (much more wicked than ours, my dear Granvers). Well, to come to business, which, in the case of so handsome a man as yourself, is pleasure, I assure you"—("She'll never change while she lives.")—"I have found the girl, and have seen her. She is really handsome, much handsomer than the photograph, a case which is not usual. Of course she is better dressed, and carries herself with better style. She can be considerably improved in both respects. After seeing her I would seriously advise you not to spoil the girl's prospects in life. *In other hands* she might be immensely advanced. But there, I must keep my promise, and assist you and your friend; but I can't entrust the secret to paper—somebody in these radical days might open the letter—and shall be at home to-morrow—at home to you, my dear, at half-past two o'clock—when I will unburthen myself to you, father confessor.—*Au revoir.*

"P.S.—Don't bring your friend on *this* occasion. On any other I shall be happy to see him."

I could not help smiling as I handed the note to Granvers.

"She's an awful woman, and at her age! Of course I'll go, and take a policeman with me, leaving him in the cab, and you may expect to see me back here, or at your office, at five o'clock."

At that hour I met him again, and found that he had got full particulars of Sarah and her whereabouts.

"The woman—Mrs. Allies, I mean—is most anxious that we should leave the girl alone. You see she relies partly upon the pretty faces around her to keep up her connection, which is of considerable social distinction; and

she has, I can see, an eye to her for her own circle. I thanked her, and told her the thing was impossible; that the lady we were acting for was a kind of mother to the girl. So she gave in, and I have her address. But how to proceed is the next question."

I suggested that we should now take counsel with Mrs. Benson. To this he assented, and agreed to call at her house in the morning, I arranging with that lady, as I went home, to receive us at eleven o'clock next day. Mrs. Benson at once resolved to go with us, and was to remain in the cab until a convenient opportunity. She was confident that if she could only get hold of Sarah she would be able to persuade her. Granvers was doubtful, but I was sanguine.

At 2.30 our cab drew up before the house, and Granvers and I got out, leaving Mrs. Benson in a state of great anxiety and trepidation. After some conversation with the principal of the house upon ordinary topics, I asked if I might see Miss Brownell (so it had been arranged between us). To this request a ready assent was given, and Sarah was summoned. A young lady, stylishly dressed, entered the room, easily, with a smile on her face, which faded away on her seeing me. It was Sarah Brownell. She turned as if to retreat, but was stayed by my voice—

"Sarah, don't you remember me? I have come to see you, my dear."

She hesitated a moment, and returned and came over to me, putting her hand tremblingly into mine, without a word, her face pale and her eyes cast down. The dame looked surprised, but only said,

"I did not know that you knew her."

"Oh, yes," I replied, "Sarah and I are very old friends. I knew her when she was a little girl, and first saw her when she had her arm round a little brother. Do you remember, Sarah?"

I thought it well to recall her old life to her memory. She did not reply, except by bursting into tears, a proceeding which increased the surprise of our hostess, who did not, however, further interfere. She was Sarah Brownell, sure enough, but a very different Sarah Brownell from the one of twelve months ago. I drew her aside, and began to talk to her in a low tone, but with gradually diminishing hope of success. At the hint agreed upon between Granvers and myself, he got up, and, saying something about speaking to the cabman, withdrew, followed by Mrs. Pitfield, who did not return. During her absence Granvers returned, bringing with him Mrs. Benson, who hastily entered the room in which Sarah and I were standing. A glance, an exclamation, and Sarah would have fled, but that her old mistress held her firmly, putting her arm round her. I thought it well to leave them alone while Granvers and I kept guard in the hall. We heard the girl sobbing, and Mrs. Benson's quiet voice between the sobs. When Mrs. Pitfield reappeared we thought it best to deal with her frankly, and tell her our object. She was evidently annoyed, but did not attempt to interrupt Mrs. Benson, although she kept watch at the door of the room. A long time passed, and hope died within me. Our hope was, that in the first revival of old memories and former influence, Sarah would yield, and consent to come with Mrs. Benson. We feared that delay meant defeat, and so it proved, for in about

half an hour—half an hour of impatience on the part of Mrs. Pitfield, who did not attempt to conceal her chagrin —Mrs. Benson emerged from the room *alone*. Sarah would not return. The former made a motherly appeal to the woman under whose care the girl was living, but all in vain. We departed without Sarah Brownell, and knew that the defeat was final. Mrs. Benson was silent and sad, saying little on our way back, a silence which Granvers and myself respected and imitated. We learnt that the unfortunate girl had, like so many of her class, begun to drink—that the life had a fascination for her, and that there was no hope.

But more was behind. Mrs. Benson had learned from Sarah that the author of her trouble was the Rev. Wilfrid Dunstan, and that the process of corruption had been going on for some time. She was inexpressibly shocked, and resolved, with righteous indignation, to expose the depraved priest. We advised caution, but she was resolved, and took a course that was successful. Arming herself with all the evidence that she could obtain from Granvers and others, she called without loss of time upon the Bishop of London and laid the whole case before him. His Lordship acted with great promptitude, and the result of his action was immediately apparent. The Rev. Wilfrid Dunstan had been announced to deliver a course of four sermons in one of the leading churches. Suddenly this engagement was cancelled, and the public was informed that the course had been taken in consequence of the sudden indisposition of the celebrated preacher. I never knew who was responsible for the paragraph which appeared in one of the morning papers,

and suspect that it was "faked." The explanation did not, however, satisfy the gossips, who were curious to know "what had happened." Rumours began to arise that Mr. Dunstan had been suspended, that something was wrong, that a terrible scandal was about to become public, which would throw light upon the secret life of one of our most eloquent preachers. The respectable daily papers, I need not say, were silent, and gave no currency to these rumours of idle gossip. But one of the numerous society papers was bolder, if less discreet, and in this sheet appeared the following paragraph—whence derived I know not:

"The facts connected with the unaccountable disappearance of a young lady some twelve months ago have recently come to light, and they make it clear that a well-known popular preacher (whose name was recently before the public as an expectant bishop of the advanced school) was concerned in it. Hence the mysterious cancellation of his preaching engagements. It is understood that the Bishop of London is engaged in a rigorous investigation of these unpleasant charges."

The writer who could write so much evidently knew more, and was prepared to support his cause before a jury.

The paragraph was like a bombshell, not only among the Rev. Wilfrid Dunstan's friends, but among the general public, for his name was widely known. The next day it was generally known that Dunstan had disappeared. It was stated that he had gone to Paris, the Continent; subsequently that he was seen in a gambling hell, then that he had been interviewed by one of his former hearers and admirers, and finally that he had

committed suicide. And the Rev. Wilfrid Dunstan ceased to be the talk of the clubs and gossips, and lived only to point a moral and adorn a tale.

CHAPTER XXVII.

COMING EVENTS CAST THEIR SHADOWS BEFORE.

TWELVE years have seen many changes, important changes. Home Rule for Ireland, followed by internal conflict, had hastened the disintegration of the Empire; the disruption of the Church of England followed its disestablishment: reforms coming too late, and in the wrong way. The change of climate, which began on the cutting of the Panama Canal, had not yet reached finality. Other changes, less startling, but more important, had followed or preceded. The rich got ever richer and richer, the poor became ever poorer and poorer. For human nature, that permanent factor in all human affairs, ran its course—a course that might have been for good, but was too often for evil. Indolence, vice, self-interest, which no legislation can correct, still held sway. For human nature is alternately swayed by higher motives, by lower impulses. When those prevail a nation advances, when these it deteriorates. These lessons are symbolised and enforced by the sanctions of religion, whose strength was a

diminishing factor, whose very existence was threatened. So misery grew apace, and the cry of the wretched was heard, like the cry of old that went up to heaven and pleaded for vengeance.

Mrs. Benson had grown old. Her white hair marked the decline of life. Sybil was married to Fred Burton, who had settled down, having sown his clerical wild oats, to solid and quiet work in a country parish. I heard from him occasionally. Once I saw a report of a public meeting where he was on the same platform with a Nonconformist minister. In reply to my note he said, "My ecclesiastical wild oats are all sown. I feel that goodness is goodness wherever found, and after all the Nonconformists love the Bible and are English."

Margaret, now in the prime of womanhood, was with her mother, soothing and blessing her closing days; she would never leave her, she said. The good Mary was a true companion and sister in the diminished household. Granvers was Chief Commissioner of Police, and will tell us something of importance respecting himself. Lord Hopfield was still an active but less sanguine politician and statesman. My position, too, had changed. I was now editor of the *London Express*, and had frequent visits from statesmen and other public men, as well as public men expectant. On a recent occasion Lord Hopfield was with me, and we were discussing the signs of the times. He was despondent of the future.

"I began my public life with the idea that I could correct existing evils with but slight changes. Every year has shown me that these are deeply rooted, and are of the grain of the stuff. Reforms, therefore, must be radical

and extensive. But so many vested interests meet one at every turn that real reform becomes almost impossible. One can change the form of things, but not the reality.

"The liquor traffic, for example, which is responsible for the loss of two hundred millions a year, lies at the root of extensive and needed reform. But it is deeply rooted in the habits of the people, and its vested interests run throughout society. Large numbers of people have a direct, and a still vaster number an indirect interest in its maintenance. To touch the question is to court defeat, and so we must stand by and see the strength and virtue of the people corrupted and decaying.

"The poverty of the people permits only a smattering of education to be given to their children. The little knowledge combined with the lack of better opportunities makes them acquainted with wild, plausible economic and social theories, and so an impulse gathers strength in the body politic from year to year whose true direction is disorder and revolution, which will not, I fear, be bloodless. Ah! the times are indeed out of joint."

During the afternoon I met Granvers, looking bright and handsome, walking the streets with firm, commanding step.

"The very man! Old friend, congratulate me; I'm engaged."

"Allow me to congratulate you, Granvers. You are engaged?—engaged to do what?"

"Engaged to be married, sir."

"I very sincerely congratulate you; and I congratulate the lady also. Who is she? Do I know her?"

"Yes, Graham, you do, slightly; and I trust you and she will know each other well, and become fast friends.

You remember the story of the poor woman I saw in Hanover Square more than twelve years ago, who, poor thing, drowned herself?"

"Perfectly. I have often been touched by the recollection of it, and have recalled it whenever I have met the poor daughter, whose melancholy used to have a fascination for me, but of late years it has disappeared."

"That is the lady—Lady Lilias."

"I offer you my warmest congratulations, old friend; may you be happy, as I am sure you will."

"Yes, I am sure I shall, please God. It grew out of that sad event to which you have referred. We had a secret between us, and she liked to talk to me of her mother, and so we were thrown a good deal into each other's society, and you know the rest—I can't tell love stories. The Earl, as I expected, refused his consent; did not like his blood to be contaminated by mixing with that of a mere English gentleman; told Lilias that he would regard her marriage, if she persisted, as a misalliance. I won't swear at him, for he's her father; but fancy! in this age, opinions like these. Lilias was as firm as a rock, although as gentle as an evening zephyr—excuse my dropping into poetry, my dear boy. Her strength and tenderness combined brought the old gentleman round, and so he gave a tardy consent. But the marriage will not be for some time. God knows whether it will ever be," he added, seriously. "Things are looking very blue. For years the people have been told that the law is only the will of a selfish minority; that all property is theft; that the rich are their natural enemies; that there's no God, and therefore they must right themselves; and, urged by

terrible sufferings, intensified by the increasing severity of the climate, they are ripe for revolution, and if only a leader were forthcoming we would have it. And the police and the soldiery, let me whisper in your ear, cannot be relied upon. Discontent is rampant and perennial; Socialism is everywhere in the ascendant, and the public-house stands open to inflame the passions of the people, as well as to rob them of their hard-earned wages. I can tell you that the outlook is very black. The one desideratum is a competent leader, and I am not sure that he is not forthcoming. A new man has suddenly appeared in the East-end, speaking at their meetings, who may turn out to be a leader. I can't find out anything about him; he is entirely unknown to me; but he's quite an orator, and is wonderfully popular. It's true, he looks a little dissipated, but his appearance may be due to hardship, or some other cause. If we can only prove him a rascal it's all right. Would you like to hear him?"

"Very much, if I can get an opportunity."

"Well, he speaks to-morrow at a mass meeting, and I am making special arrangements to preserve order. If you don't mind being seen with a policeman I shall be glad of your company."

I accepted Granvers' invitation. Just as we were parting he exclaimed,

"By the way, you recollect the poor girl Mrs. Benson was interested in. Well, I saw her some little time since. She's badly changed—going down steadily; drink, I fear. She'll end, poor thing, in the river—'One more unfortunate!'"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A SOCIALIST LECTURER.

In good time on the following evening I met my friend, and we went together to the place of meeting, a large building capable of holding three or four thousand people. This was full when we arrived, and round the doors and in the streets was a large number of the class that always hangs on the outskirts of public meetings. The audience inside made room for the commissioner of police and his friend. They were of the poorer class, but were thoughtful and intelligent looking. Many women were among the audience.

"This man," said Granvers, "is a dangerous fellow. The opinions he advocates have been urged by him and others for years; the people are saturated with them; if only they could find a leader we should have trouble."

At the appointed hour the chairman, a clergyman, whose name I had often heard but whom I had never seen, followed by the lecturer, or speaker, and his friends, came upon the platform to a round of applause. I looked eagerly at the speaker of the evening, whom I had immediately singled out from Granvers' description of him. He was a tall, thickly-built man. His features dark; his hair, beard, and moustache iron grey. After his introduction by the chairman, he rose easily, and at once began his speech. He had, he said, devoted his life to the study of social and economic questions; and after much hesitation and with great reluctance had resolved

to break through the habits of a lifetime, and place his knowledge and abilities, however humble, at the service of his countrymen in their struggle with the wealth and power of those who called themselves the upper classes. This sentiment awakened uproarious applause from his audience. He proposed to deliver a calm and unimpassioned speech, for he addressed himself to thoughtful men. The time for action would come by-and-by, when, he hoped, none of the vast audience which he saw before him would shrink from shouldering a musket, if need be. He would begin with a fundamental principle of all true reform—the equality of man. After the applause which greeted this declaration had subsided, the speaker said:

"All men are equal"—("Hear, hear")—"this is a fundamental fact, and lies at the root of all true reform. Whether the legend of Adam is true or not, the fact is, that men are all of one blood, and are therefore equal."

"What, not the nigger, guv'ner?"

This sally produced a laugh.

"Well, if all men are equal, how is it that some ride in carriages, while the many walk; that some live sumptuously, while the majority have only the bare necessaries of life?"

"We haven't got them," said several voices.

"Some even starve; while others, the few I speak of, live wastefully and viciously. How, I ask, does this state of things come about? By barefaced robbery. What these people call their property is the spoil which they have taken from the poor oppressed labourer."

"So it is; you're right, old man; go on."

"I'll prove this to demonstration, if you will give me your earnest attention." The majority were listening intently, and were ready to correct the speaker if he failed or halted in his argument. "The working men of this country, aided by their wives and children"—("Shame")—"produce, that is, create, some £1,250,000,000 worth of commodities every year. That is all that is produced; not one farthing's worth of this is produced by those who live luxuriously and drive in carriages. How then do they obtain the luxury which they spend upon their vices? By robbing the labourer of his hardly earned gains. There is no other explanation possible. Listen to me." The audience listened breathlessly. "If those who produce all the wealth of England should cease to labour for ten or fifteen years there would not be a blessed stick left in the country; all would be sold or pawned to other nations, to enable us to purchase food and clothing. Even the houses in which we live would no longer belong to us."

"They don't now, governor."

"Well, this is pretty conclusive evidence that the privileged classes are not producing any of the luxuries which they enjoy, and if they do not, then they get them from you, and you don't know it; it is so cunningly done."

"Oh, we know it! we've known it a many years."

"I'll explain to you how it is done. These robbers have seized all the instruments of production. With the aid of God and heaven and hell, which they have invented, they have cajoled and compelled you to give them possession of the land, and all the other instruments

needed to produce this £1,250,000,000. Then they allow you to use them, under terrible penal sanctions, of which the gallows is not the worst, and exact from you the greater proportion of your earnings; your earnings remember, not theirs. Under the names of rent, interest, profit, they take two-thirds of all that is produced, and leave you, the workers, the remaining one-third. Society, as at present constituted, is an ingenious device by which these cowardly robbers (who haven't the pluck of the old highwayman) rob you, their dupes, of your own earnings. This is strictly true. For a great writer, whose work is a text-book on the subject of which I am speaking, has said that 'the produce of labour is the natural recompense or wages of labour.' That sentence deserves to be printed in gold, and placed in every working man's home: 'the produce of labour is the natural recompense of labour.' If a man goes out fishing, and fishes all night, and comes back to the shore in the morning with his boat full of fish, to whom do they belong?"

"They're his'n, of course."

"Yes; they are his own, being the recompense of his labour; and if some idler, well dressed and comfortable looking, who had been asleep all night in his feather bed, while the poor man had been tossing on the dangerous sea, should come by and claim two-thirds or one-half of the fish as belonging to him, the fisherman would be justified in knocking down the respectably-dressed thief." —(Exclamations of "Hear, hear," followed by cheers, showed that the argument had gone home.)—"But this is how the great army of workers have been, and still are, treated. By various devices the well-dressed thief,

who never risks his precious neck, takes away two-thirds of your earnings, and thus, without labour, possesses himself of that wealth which he uses so badly, flaunting his superiority in the face of his victims and dupes."—(There were general murmurs of approval, and cries of "That's true, that's true.")—"Yes, and in order that you might not find out and detect the fraud, you have been kept in ignorance. For centuries the working classes were kept without instruction, or if they had any, it was summed up in the words that they were to order themselves lowly and reverently to all their betters; which meant touching the hat to the parson and the squire; and to do their duty in that state of life where they found themselves, and never to think of rising out of it. But when you insisted upon your children receiving some education, and thus learning to read, your oppressors got alarmed, lest you should read for yourself, and find out how shamefully you had been treated. So what did they do next? Got hold of the newspapers, and took care that they should be written in their interests. So they took away the key of knowledge. But the game is over. The people are waking up, and they will presently claim their own. Why, do you know, if you only had your own, that which you earn by the sweat of your brow, every man, woman, and child would get from £30 to £40 a year each? Just think of that."

"Why, I've twelve of 'em; how much be my share?

"Nearly £600 a year, my man."

"Bless us," exclaimed the man, in astonishment.

This revelation, for such it was, caused a little interruption in the speaker's harangue, which gave the audi-

ence opportunity to blow off the steam and relieve their excitement in conversation; and the speaker time to take breath and prepare for the second part of his address. This was inaugurated by an invitation from a shrewd man in the body of the hall to tell us how we are to do it: "How are we to get hold of things?" The question was pertinent, and caused instant silence. The speaker continued:

"I'll tell you both how to get hold and how to keep hold when you've got them."

"Ay, ay; Brag is a good dog, but Holdfast's a better."

"There are two ways of getting back all that is your own. One, which I do not recommend, is, to return Members of Parliament from your own class, pledged to change the laws, so as to force these robbers to disgorge their illgotten wealth. That will take a long time: some people have calculated quite two hundred years. And during all those years you will be poor, your children will be poor, and your grandchildren will be poor; and then there's always a chance that you will fail."

"That be no good for we; tell us the other way."

"The other is the good old English way of using your fisticuffs and taking it!" This sentiment pleased the audience immensely.

"And you being the many, can if you will."

"We will, we will; we've been poor long enough!"

"Ay," said a former querist, "but how are we to keep it when we've got it?"

"I'll tell you. The whole nation will own everything—the land, capital, machinery, everything; and will give the use of it to all who are willing to work. Whatever is pro-

duced (this £1,250,000,000) will be equally divided among the workers."

"But suppose I work eight hours, and another man, equally strong, works only four. Will he get as much as me?"

"No; the man who does the best and the most work will be entitled to get a larger share of that which is produced; for the produce of labour is the natural recompense of labour. A man who works, say, only forty hours a week"—("And plenty too")—"Yes, and plenty too, as my friend says—will be credited on the books of the State with his forty hours; the man who works only twenty will be credited with twenty, and will be able to buy all he requires by giving the time he has worked in exchange for what he gets. In this way the industrious man may put by a part of his time (that which he does not spend) for a rainy day or for a holiday. Time will be money, and no other money will be needed. With it he can buy food, clothes, beer, recreation, and no middleman can put it away in a bank, or lend it out at interest, growing rich at the expense of other people's labour. The country will thus be freed from the curse of pauperism, and the equal curse of luxurious idleness. All will be prosperous, contented, and happy, and the fabled millennium will have come."

The speaker resumed his seat amid thunderous applause, and loud approvals of his speech. On the whole the meeting had been very orderly, considering the class of people composing it and the character of the address. There had been some few expressions of dissent, particularly when the speaker advocated the confiscation of landed property. On

these occasions the chairman had promptly intervened and said, "Please don't interrupt the speaker. If any man dissents from his opinion he shall have an opportunity of saying so."

CHAPTER XXIX.

A REPLY: THE PRODUCE OF LABOUR IS THE NATURAL RECOMPENSE OR WAGES OF LABOUR.

When the applause had somewhat subsided, the reverend chairman arose and said: "Someone in the body of the meeting dissented from the speaker's proposal to confiscate the land, as the phrase is, and other instruments of production. He now has an opportunity of expressing his opinion on this subject. But before calling upon him permit me to make one remark in support of the speaker's proposal. It is this—There's an old book which says, 'The earth is the Lord's.' It does not, therefore, belong to the landlord, who has stolen it, and must be made to disgorge his prey."

No one moved when the chairman resumed his seat. There were loud cries of "Now's your time," "Come on," "Spit it out, old man," and other equally playful demonstrations, at the objector's expense. Still nobody moved.

Presently a costermonger whom I knew stood up, and addressing the lecturer said, "I say, mister, you told us

the State would take everything—from the rich; but not from the likes of us. I have a donkey and a cart, which I bought with my own money; what I want to know is, will they take my donkey?" Having delivered this facer, the speaker sat down. But the lecturer declined to be drawn by a matter of detail, and retained his seat. The costermonger was not to be put off in this way, and was soon upon his feet again. "I want to know," he reiterated, "will they take my donkey, mister?" After this appeal Mr. Reynolds felt constrained to give some kind of reply, as the audience evidently expected one. It was short and to the point. "Why, of course, if the people own everything, they will own your donkey too; it will be taken for the good of the people, of whom you are one." The audience applauded. But the costermonger was not to be beaten; he stood up immediately and blurted out, "Then I'm not on, mister; I paid for Ned with my own money, and I'm blest if anyone takes him from me." Loud laughter greeted this hostile declaration, in the midst of which the querist resumed his seat. This little by-play amused the audience; still no reply to the lecturer was forthcoming.

Urged by a sudden and almost irresistible impulse, I started to my feet, and all eyes were at once directed to me, and cries arose of, "Here he is at last," "Keep up your spirits, my boy," amid which I made my way to the platform. "He's a newspaper man," "Chuck him out," arose from some. "No, no, let him speak," said others. I bowed to the chairman, and, facing the vast audience, began my reply. There was a conscious hush, and every word was heard.

"I have listened, as I am sure all of this great meeting have done, with deep attention and interest to the eloquent speech of the gentleman who has addressed us." ("Soft soap," interjected someone.) "And in attempting to point out its fallacies I must ask your indulgence, as I have no opportunity to prepare my speech. With one preliminary remark I will begin my task. I am deeply interested in the question of elevating the masses, and improving their position. The paper which I have the honour to direct, the *London Express*" —("Three cheers for the *London Express*," cried one; and three cheers were given.) "Thank you, on behalf of the proprietors of that journal. The *London Express* has advocated for years the cause of the people; and I should bitterly regret to see the advantages that we have slowly gained thrown away by a false move on the part of the people themselves; and it is the conviction that such a step will be taken if you follow the advice given by the eloquent speaker that induces me to stand here." ("Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking," cried the ever-present wag, whose sally was followed by good-humoured laughter.)

Encouraged by the temper of the meeting, I continued: "Let us take the speaker's several points, so far as I remember them, one by one. First, he said that we are all equal." ("So we are.") "Yes, so we are, in this sense —that all have equal rights. In other respects we are not equal. These two men standing before me" (pointing to a man over six feet standing by the side of a small man about five, in view of the audience) "are not equal, in size or strength." (This personal allusion tickled the

humour of my listeners, and their good temper gave me confidence.) "Confidently, then, I contend that men are *not* equal in the sense intended by the speaker." (I felt that I was carrying the sense of the meeting with me.) "They are not equal in size and strength; in intelligence and skill; in moral qualities and force of character. We all know this. Nature or God has conferred higher qualities on one man than on another." ("Why has He? it isn't fair." "Order, order," responded the chairman.) "I cannot—no person can—answer that question. It is a fact that it is so; and these differences are responsible for many of the differences in life complained of. I remember a story in an old book, of two boys, to each of whom the father had given a fruit-tree equal in quality. One lad dug about the roots of his tree, manured it, pruned it at the right season, and sufficiently. The other lad neglected his tree, liked idling and play better than work, with this result, that while the first tree was loaded with fruit, his was barren. Of course he blamed the tree, his father, his brother, anybody but himself, and wanted to share the fruits of his brother's labour. In this case the natural and just recompense of labour was the fruit of the tree." ("But it's the idle class," interjected Mr. Reynolds, "which gets the fruit at present.") ("Hear, hear," and I had the sense of the audience against me.) "There is no idle class," I replied. There was loud laughter and interruption at this sentiment. "No," I repeated, "there is no idle class; and I am sure you will, like honest Englishmen, admit this in a moment. There are idle men and women, plenty of them, in all classes." ("Special pleading;" "Good Old Bailey lawyer;" "What's your

fee, old man?" "Be quiet, Bill, or he'll put you in the paper;" and sundry other interjections.) "Yes, the idle are not confined to any one class; they are found in all. There are idle noblemen; there are idle working men; men who prefer to idle about, with pipes in their mouths, while the poor wife does the work. I appeal to you if this is not true." ("Yes, yes, it's as true as gospel," said the shrill voice of a woman, which raised the good-natured laughter of the meeting.) "There are men in all classes who work, but all do not work in the same way. Some work with their hands, some with their brains. Some produce, some protect, some heal; and all do work necessary for the State—that is, for the rest of the community. One man, it is said, can produce sufficient to maintain ten people; but the other nine are not idle. They are usefully employed, and are honestly entitled to a share of that which the first man produces. Let me take the speaker's own illustration. A man catches a lot of fish. They are the produce of his labour, we are told, and are therefore the natural recompense, or wages, of his labour. That is true. Let us see how the matter will pan out. First, then, the successful fisherman has to give some of his fish for the hire of the boat, or for the interest of the money spent in building it; then some more to the man who lends his horse and cart to carry them to market; some to the lad who drives the horse. A dispute arises about the fish sold, so a policeman is needed, and some of the fish must go to him; a magistrate must decide; in order that his case may be carefully stated, a lawyer is employed; all these must take some portion of the fish. But the fisherman may be driven away by France or

Germany from the waters frequented by the fish, so a navy is needed to protect his fishing rights. And all these must be paid out of the fish caught by the fisherman. Instead of these several payments—for these and other purposes, as the doctor who attends us in sickness, the newspaper that brings us the news—being made in this primitive way, society, at infinite cost and pains, and after many attempts, has built up a system through which they are all made in an indirect way, gold and silver in the form of money being the measure of values. Those who are wrongly called the idle classes may be non-producers; but they are necessary, and rightly demand a share of that which is produced. The division of labour is an economical arrangement.

"Very often those who discharge important functions in the community get no remuneration for their services. They live on their 'means.'" ("Which they have stolen from the people," interjected Mr. Reynolds. This sentiment was received with applause.) "That is not a fair statement of the case. The landed gentry (I am not advocating the maintenance of a landed gentry) live on their means, which they have, usually, inherited from their fathers, and I am only asking for them that fair treatment from the hands of Englishmen which has for centuries been their characteristic: that the sins of the fathers, or of the system, should not be visited upon an innocent people. Land and capital are in the hands of the comparatively few. The rent and interest which they derive from these sources, enables them to live without becoming producers. All men ought to work; and, as I have shown, most men do work; and while these work, the community pays them

nothing for their labour. They live upon their 'means'; that is, upon what they have earned and put by, or upon what they have inherited from their fathers." ("And they stole it from others:") "Excuse me, that is not true. Centuries ago, the soil of England became the spoil of the Conqueror; and was given by him, under the sanction of the sword, to his followers. It has long since passed, most of it, by legitimate purchase, into the hands of others who gave in exchange for it their hard-earned money, and took possession with the sanction of the State. That is, A., a retired tradesman, who had saved two or three thousand pounds, the 'natural recompense or wages of his labour,' gave his earnings to B., and received in exchange, with the sanction of the community, the land which he calls his estate. Can the community honestly deny his right to the full value of the estate? To confiscate it would be an act of spoliation and robbery. No; if you want his land, either buy it at the market price, or give him back his money, and increase it by the difference between the interest it would have gained during all the years that he was not using it, and what the estate has produced. You would, I believe, find it cheaper to take it at its market value. Rent and interest, therefore, are in part the produce of past labour, whose results have been saved up and handed on to the descendants of those who accumulated them. For time does not vitiate the connexion between labour and its natural recompense. If the natural recompense is my own, then I can give it to whom I please without injury to the community. Nor can you by any act prevent such accumulations.

"The lecturer, in reply to very pertinent questions,

manifested some inconsistency. He first said that the produce of labour should be equally divided among the labourers; and then that it should be divided proportionally to the time and skill of the labourers engaged in its production. This variation is of the essence of socialistic theories.

"Either a man must be free to labour for a longer or a shorter period; or all men must work equal times—being driven to the field or the workshop—in which case slavery is reinstated, the slave-owner being the State. Thus liberty ceases; and this privation is in conflict with an instinct of human nature. Or, if each man asserts his right, after making due provision for himself and those dependent upon him, to determine his labour the moment that position is reached, then financial variation begins. One man will labour sixty hours a week, another twenty; and unless you take from the former the excess and surplus of his labour, in which case you again come into conflict with an instinct of human nature, he becomes rich or is on the road to wealth, for the produce of labour is the natural recompense or wages of labour.

"Mr. Reynolds's scheme thus affords the same facilities for the accumulation of wealth as that now existing. He told us that a man may get credit for his forty hours of work done in a week; that with part of this he can buy the necessaries of life, laying by the surplus for a rainy day. We are told that twenty or thirty hours a week may be saved in this way; that means an accumulation of one thousand or fifteen hundred hours in a year. The man is already a small capitalist. If he can paint a picture or write a popular book, the sale of these might bring in

twenty thousand or fifty thousand hours, and the man is rich in accumulated time, which is the measure of values, and there is nothing to prevent him investing this accumulated time and living upon the proceeds of the investment. Intermediaries, ready to advance a little time, will soon come into existence, and the new state of things will be as bad as the first. The time thus accumulated can be transferred, through exchange merchants, to other countries, France, Italy, &c., and there turned into gold and silver —the universal measure of values. The fact is, human nature is human nature, and you cannot correct its tendencies by Acts of Parliament.

"In old days the tall and strong became chiefs; later, those who had knowledge became leaders of the people. Now the wise and capable reap the advantage. And it must be so; the utmost we can do is to safeguard the elementary rights of all people, and leave the nation to develope by the free play—limited as I have said—of individual character and ability."

"How then would you change the existing condition of things, which you admit to be bad?" asked the reverend chairman.

"Aim high; set before the people the highest ideal that can be reasonably conceived—the millennium, if you like, that Mr. Reynolds desires; and strive to attain it by observing the true laws of progress, of which confiscation and robbery are no part. Teach the true economic laws of production and distribution; eliminate the middleman, so far as possible, that the producer and consumer may meet together. Thus, in general terms. Particularly, I would urge sobriety and industry; develope the intelli-

gence; and cultivate the character of the people. These personal qualities, acting through equal laws, would lift the people to a higher level, and improve their material condition immensely.

"Let me add one word about the soil. Land is one of the elementary necessities of life, like air and water, and must be held for the benefit of *all*." (This sentiment was enthusiastically received.) "But *all* cannot cultivate land. The many must be employed in other ways. How then must it be held? Only two principal methods are open to us. It must be held by the State, being leased by the State, or cultivated by the State. That is, it must be managed by a department, with all the chances of jobbery and private patronage that characterise public management. Or, it must be held by individual proprietors, who are permitted to use the land in exchange for a lump sum paid to the State. This is the best and most profitable method. For men work with better heart, and knowledge is more skilfully applied, when they work for themselves. Hence private ownership, rigidly conditioned by the general canon—that individual rights must be subordinated to the welfare of the community—is the best, and with wise laws, this means the soil for the cultivators of the soil; or, if you prefer it, a peasant, or small farmer proprietorship, whose recompense is the produce of his labour.

"Life is complex and disciplinary, and was intended to be so by its Divine author. We may easily miss the mark and go astray. Therefore, I have compelled myself to say these things to you. Once, at least, the world started on its course full of hope, with energies renewed by Chris-

tianity; it swerved from the right course, and plunged into the dark ages—ages of ignorance and superstition; of cruel and desolating wars, which enslaved both the bodies and the souls of men, and led them back to barbarism. From this evil state the great Reformation and the Renaissance delivered us, and set our feet upon the right road. Do not let us again lose the way, for the light is breaking, and plunge into another darkness worse than the first. Thank you for your patient attention to a somewhat long speech."

There was some applause when I concluded, sufficient to make me feel hopeful that my seed might fall, here and there, upon good ground, and bear fruit. "Well done," whispered Granvers, as I took my seat by his side. "I don't think he can answer that." Mr. Reynolds was rising to his feet. He merely said, "At this late hour I will not further detain you, but merely rise to say one word in reference to one of the speaker's remarks about God. He seems to be pretty familiar with God and His purposes; I wish to say that the existence of God is a pure theological assumption; that it cannot be proved, and that much of the speaker's argument falls, with his assumption, to the ground. I will take an early opportunity of showing this. Good night, brothers and sisters, and thanks to our excellent chairman." The man was master of the meeting, which slowly dispersed.

"That's a dangerous man," repeated Granvers, when we got outside; "and a very plausible fellow. I wonder where he came from."

"Do you know," I replied, "his voice falls upon my ear

familiarly; but I cannot recollect his face. He must be close upon sixty."

"About fifty-five, I should think," replied Granvers; "maybe not so much, for he's rather dissipated, I fancy. If he is we need not fear him."

CHAPTER XXX.

GOD IN POLITICAL ECONOMY.

A PRESS of work kept me fully employed for some weeks. The whole of England was agitated by the labour question: strike followed strike in rapid succession; strikes in various parts of London, carefully organised, were followed by strikes in all the great cities. It seemed as if all England were in a state of ferment, and that her trade and finance were about to collapse. Hence I was kept close at my desk, and Mr. Reynolds and his proposed meeting were forgotten. A notice in one of the evening papers recalled the proposal to my recollection. It was to the effect that the people's Orator and Leader, Mr. Henry Reynolds, would deliver a lecture that evening on "God in Political Economy," the lecture to be followed by discussion. The ingenuity of the title struck me, and I resolved to be present. So a little before the hour named I was in the hall where the lecturer was to speak. It

was already packed with a serious, hard-headed audience. For many religious people, I have found, are always on the alert when an attack is to be made upon the foundation of their faith, as if they feared that in their absence it might be rooted up; and the vicious are always ready to support an attack upon that which threatens their vices with pains and penalties; while others again are interested in the economical aspect of the question proposed for discussion. The audience was composed of these several classes, an attentive, orderly meeting. Mr. Henry Reynolds, whose voice again awakened old memories, began his lecture by emphasising the importance of the subject. The rectification of life's inequalities, he said, was thrown upon God and the unseen world by those interested in maintaining the present order of things. As a counterpoise to this life's wretchedness they invented God and Heaven; they painted a future life of happiness and blessing where the wicked (that is themselves) cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest; where all tears are wiped away, and there is no more hunger or thirst; where the sun shall not smite by day, nor the moon by night; and they offer this condition of things as compensation for the present state of suffering and misery. Now, if all this was true, we might well be asked to bear patiently the sufferings of this life, for they are not worthy to be compared with the glory which is to be revealed—after death. At the worst, if suffering become intolerable, a bodkin would work our deliverance, and introduce us to the land of promise, more blessed than the land of milk and honey assured to the Jews in old times. Now, if all the wretched dupes of the privileged classes should believe this story,

and should act upon their belief, they would hasten their escape from this world of misery and suffering by voluntary emigration to another sphere; and the oppressors would have no one left to earn their money, to clean their boots, and cook their food for them. This would never do. The privileged classes would cease to be privileged, and would be left alone upon the earth. So a Hell was invented, where the disobedient would be tortured for ever and ever. This invention had a restraining effect upon their dupes, and kept them here in servitude, working out their future redemption by lives of obedience to their pastors and masters. This life, it was said, was probationary and preparatory. See then that you behave well —as your pastors and masters teach you—or you will come under the ban of an offended God. "You see, then," he said, "the urgent importance of the subject—'God in Political Economy.'

"Before we can permit the intrusion of God into social and economic questions, we must be sure that He is, and that He intends to treat us well, and kindly. We start in our inquiry from the existence of the world and all that is in it. Here we are. This is a certain fact. The human mind is self-impelled to ask, and to try to resolve the question, 'Whence?' Two principal answers only are possible. The first, that the universe, and all the forces that are perpetually changing the forms of existence, are eternal; that they have always been, and that they, inscrutable to us, have brought about all past changes, and are perpetually bringing about all new changes that take place in the present; that they destroy and rebuild; make void and recreate; destroy one world and create another.

Or that the universe had a beginning, originating through some Force, whose action is inscrutable. This is the Spencerian philosophy. The words of the great thinker are that the power of which the universe is the manifestation is inscrutable, that is, unknowable. That is all. There is no other theory possible. But Christians tell us that this Force is God, and that He is possessed of personal attributes.

"Everybody knows, and nobody can tell, what personality means. Christians affirm that God is a personal being. They go further, and tell us that He is a Father —'Our Father in Heaven.' Well, let us look around us with this Christian idea in our minds. We see the portion of the world, of which we form a part, full of incongruities, of blunders, of waste, purposeless waste, and worst of all, of cruelties that appal us, cruelties in the animal world, more agonising cruelties in the human world, and we are asked to believe that these suffering men, women, and children are the children of a Divine Father. All I can say, as I contemplate their sad condition, is, that they are not a credit to Him."

A visible shudder went through the audience at this daring blasphemy, and some persons left the room. The speaker continued:

"I was brought up to believe in God, and to pray to Him. I need not say that I now neither believe in Him nor pray to Him. Let me trace the history of my mind. The Christian idea of prayer is that in it we speak to One who, though unseen, is ever near, and listens to our cry; that His presence and personality are as real as those of an earthly father, and that in appeal-

ing to Him we appeal to One who is possessed of almighty power to fulfil our desires. This is a very beautiful theory, and by it men seek to redress the manifest inequalities presented by the condition of the world. God is at hand, He is listening, He is able to deliver you out of your distress. In prayer we confidently appeal to the Being who is created by the Christian religion. We believe that our lightest word is heard; yes, that the thought of our heart is seen.

'Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed;
The motion of a hidden fire
That burns within the breast.'

"We all know this, and we have probably all prayed—felt impelled to call upon the Strong for strength and help; and we have all been disappointed. I emphasise this. We have prayed, that is, asked for something from One whom we were taught to believe was well able to give it, and we have not received. How many instances of failure can I recall in early life! Once, a little brother lay at the point of death. He had been a merry little chap, and was the delight of our home. But his gambols and merriment were all stilled now; the feeble life was flickering in little Willie's pulse. We were all gathered round the bed of the dying child, weeping bitterly, and, according to Christian theology, there were unseen witnesses of our great sorrow. At this moment my father said, 'Let us pray to One who is a Father and can help us, to Him who restored to Jairus his already dead child. He is here, where two or three are met together, and it may be

Hear will he us for our little Willie.' We fell upon our knees and prayed. My father prayed so earnestly and touchingly; and when he ceased then my mother, and her passionate entreaty melted us all into tears, and we broke out sobbing. She spoke as to One actually present, and I confidently expected to see my brother rise up and walk, or at any rate sit up and take food like the daughter of Jairus. When we rose from our knees I looked eagerly to Willie—he was in the last agony of death. With one tender, half-conscious glance at his mother, he passed away, and his death almost broke my mother's heart."

The speaker paused, as if overcome by painful memories. When he continued he said,

"This is representative of thousands of cases that occur every week. Broken-hearted mothers and fathers cry to Heaven and no answer comes back to earth.

"Later in life, when I grew to manhood, I mixed with religious men and women, clergymen and others. Now, I said, I know those who are in communication with God; they will be different from other people. I observed them closely. Had I discerned a real difference I might have come to believe that the difference was due to the action of some other force than those included in and generalised under the name of Nature. I could observe and number the forces working upon other men and women; I found that in like manner those acting upon religious men and women came within the sphere of observation, and were numerable. Then there was nothing supernatural in their lives. They ate and drank, moved by the propensities of their natures; they slept and sheltered themselves; they sought recreation and

change; they entered into social relations, moved thereto by well-known causes. If my observation ascended to higher spheres of experience, I detected the same resemblances; the causes operating were known and numerable. Then they did not come from a supernatural sphere; they did not come from God. These men and women were like others in character—sometimes bad-tempered and impatient, sometimes selfish, and worse; yet they prayed, and their prayers produced no change in them. It was evident that their prayers did not put them into communion with such a Being as Christianity represents: my observation pointed to the same conclusion as my own experience.

"But it may be said, the action of a Supernatural Being upon an individual mind may be resisted and counteracted by the individual will. I waive the reply that where the Infinite Actor possesses all the resources of the universe directed by infinite wisdom with which He may constrain or crush that finite will, such resistance would be impossible. To discuss this question would involve us in metaphysical subtleties, and I prefer to keep in the open air. Let us therefore search for the action which involves the existence of a Supernatural Being in wide stretches of time, where the idiosyncrasies of one individual will are corrected and balanced by those of another, and all that remains is the corrected sum. Surely here, if it exist, its direction and rule will be disclosed. Four thousand years of human history, and what is it? A series of pictures of lust, and violence, and bloodshed; of oppression, poverty, misery, and crime, the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain. The martyrdom of man! strength, cruelty, and fraud triumphing over the weak, the gentle,

the simple, over those who ought to be under supernatural protection. This is, shortly, the scene which history presents, and the present condition of the world is the foreground of the great picture which the hand of time is painting. Does its contemplation encourage us to believe that the artist's hand is directed by Divine skill? No, emphatically no!"

Here the pent-up feelings of the audience found expression in sympathetic applause.

"A survey of the universe does not then disclose the existence of a personal Being."

"What about the Bible?" shouted someone from the audience.

"I am coming to that. Does the Bible reveal—that is the word of theologians—does the Bible reveal a personal God? The collection of ancient writings known among Christians by that name talks about a personal God as if He were a superior kind of man, with man's infirmities and passions. Homer, Virgil, and other heathen writers represent their gods in the same way; yet we do not believe their creations to be realities. Ought we to believe that the God of the Bible is a reality? To answer this question we must know the writers of the several books, and judge of their capacity and honesty. But, if there's one thing which historical criticism has made clear, it is that we do not know them. Who wrote the books of Moses? We do not know. It is admitted by Christian writers that these books are full of legend—that is, that they are not history. Who wrote the Psalms?—the books of the Prophets? Christian critics will tell you that there were two Isaiahs; that the story of Jonah is a myth;

that the Book of Daniel was written after the events which it professes to foretell. Coming to the New Testament we are beset by the same uncertainty and doubt. The Gospels, and most of the Epistles, and the Book of Revelation were the works of unknown men, some of whom lived in the second century. Only two or three letters by Paul are genuine. So that the conclusion is forced upon us that Christianity is the creation of human minds and hearts; that its so-called revelation is splendid guess-work, that is all. It does not therefore reveal, although it talks much about, a personal God, so we are landed where we were before.

"We see a universe, of which we are a part, around us, and all we know respecting its origin is that it is either eternal or the product of a Force which is inscrutable. The history of the world does not disclose a supernatural personality. Man has occupied the earth for 60,000 years at least. During all those years God, if God there be, has remained silent; silent, too, when speech were golden. Man, miserable man, clad in the skins of wild beasts, living precariously, exposed to the rigours of arctic and antarctic cold, wandered over the face of the icebound earth for centuries, unhelped. No angel, moved by even a human compassion, ever broke through the veil and came to comfort him. He was left alone, to struggle on, through ignorance, folly, and crime, towards the light of a better life; and by his own unaided efforts he has advanced slowly to his present state. The conclusion is that there is no God, and no life hereafter; that all our efforts are bounded by the horizon of life, and that life is rounded off by eternal sleep. The conclusion demonstrates that we

must not wait for the help of our spiritual unseen neighbours, but must depend upon ourselves and our own exertions.

"There are no Divine laws: Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, and a host of other laws, are not Divine, but human laws. They have been, most of them, made in the interests of the few—the strong, the rich—in order to hedge them round with sanctions that would preserve to them those advantages which they had gained by superior strength and fraud. In the future the laws will be, must be, made in the interests of the many. Meanwhile, we, being the many, repeal and abrogate by our action all laws that withhold from us our rights, and trample them under our feet."

The speaker resumed his seat amid demonstrations of approval. That man, any man, should be glad to know that there is no God, no Father, seems to me an appalling instance of perversity. Were it true that God is not, truly the universe should put on mourning, and human tears should flow unceasingly; for then there is no Eye watching over us, no Hand guiding us, no Heart caring for us.

CHAPTER XXXI.

GOD IN THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE WORLD.

After a somewhat prolonged silence, the Chairman rose and said that the meeting was now open, and that discus-

sion was invited. No one accepted the invitation, but there was a breathless state of expectancy. In its midst someone rose amid universal observation, and I saw my old friend Mr. Grately standing up, his white hair—prematurely white—conspicuous in his appearance. He no sooner got into the view of the audience than there arose cries of "He's a parson!" "Turn him out!" "No parsons!" and counter cries of "We know him!" "He's a good 'un!" "He's our parson!"

Amid these demonstrations Mr. Grately walked to the platform and took his place in front of the audience. He was violently agitated, and spoke at first with a trembling voice. "Yes," he began, in allusion to the cries which first greeted his appearance, "I'm a parson—I'm an East-end parson—and there are many here who know me." Considerable and friendly applause greeted the old man and encouraged him. "I have spent my life among the poor, and God knows that if I believed what the lecturer has told you I should die, life would be insupportable, for an eternal night of despair would cover the face of the earth. Let me shortly, as a kind of preface, contrast the case of the unbeliever and that of the believer. We are face to face in nature with three mysterious and appalling facts:—1. The existence of life—physical life, mental life, and what I may call spiritual life. No one can account for its origin or explain its nature. 2. The existence of suffering, the evil which cancels the blessing of life, and intensifies its mystery. The words of the great apostle, already quoted here, correctly describe this fact—the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together. It is the presence of suffering which wakens up

man's energies and arouses his sympathies, consequences which offer a clue to the reason of the fact. Then there is the great fact of—3. Death. Death comes to us in the midst of our misery and terminates our career abruptly, and often painfully. Those who have gone from us come not back again—never break the awful silence. This fact intensifies the former.

"Now these are facts evident to all, and how does unbelief treat them? Unbelief, with its superficial attainments, its almost contemptuous methods, sweeps the universe lightly, and declares to expectant, suffering man, Death is the end of life. There is no hope for man; the mysteries of life can never be solved; the problem is insoluble. Then the miseries of life are wrapped about by an Egyptian darkness, and the condition of suffering man is without hope. And this conclusion, to my pain and sorrow, I have heard welcomed with acclamation and applause by intelligent men and women, the subjects of the suffering! Incredible one would think! Such is the gospel of unbelief, such the welcome it receives from man. Now turn to the Christian solution and contrast it with the creed of pessimism. Christianity throws light upon the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and by its light—faint indeed, but sufficient—we see the other side of the shore, and there those who have gone from us are seen, living still, living under other conditions. Here, then, is hope in which the heart of suffering humanity can rest for a little while, until hope ends in fruition.

"I have thus stated the broad issues between belief and unbelief. Let me now advance along the lines of proof which lead to the Christian conclusion. I accept

Mr. Herbert Spencer's philosophical conclusion—that the universe is the manifestation of an inscrutable power; inscrutable to philosophical and scientific research, as these terms are improperly restricted. The universe examined by scientific methods manifests an inscrutable power. But what is a manifestation? It is the intellectual apprehension of that which is unseen, secret, or obscure. The thing manifested may be secret or obscure, but that by which it is manifested throws some light upon its character and nature. The universe is the manifestation of a power—your lecturer said a force. Well, the contemplation of the universe forces upon us certain conclusions respecting the Power which is behind the universe. Its vastness implies power; its adjustments some degree of wisdom; its tendency to promote the happiness of the world, seen in ten thousand ways, predicates goodness. Here, then, Spencer's conclusion leads necessarily to others—that this inscrutable Power is powerful, wise, and good, in some degree. I do not say infinite, for I am only speaking philosophically. If no other revelation existed than the universe, of which we form a part, then we could with confidence infer that the Force behind it was possessed of power, wisdom, and goodness in some measure; and when we interrogate man, and his mysterious nature, and examine dispassionately the facts of human life, as displayed in history, we obtain a fuller revelation of the nature of this inscrutable Power. Through the long stretch of history we discern a purpose.

"'I doubt not through the ages one eternal purpose runs,' and that purpose is ever, with many interruptions,

from better to better, endowing us with a glorious hope—the Christian hope. At this point we eagerly ask: Has this being ever spoken to man—to guide, instruct, and warn him? And we wait anxiously for the reply to this question. All nations say He has, and I am not concerned to deny that revelations—real revelation, though imperfect and tainted by its instruments—have been made to all nations.

"The Christian revelation is certainly one, full, complete, and final. In regard to the literature known as the Bible, I will make one general remark. When compared with other ancient literature its unique character is manifest. It is better and higher than all the products of the children of men. The purpose may be the same, but the character is different. Its elevation of sentiment impresses us, its influence moulds us, its spirit informs us. It fills the distant spaces of the universe with light and life and movement; it brings us into communication with them—bringing us messages and grace from the Eternal. The communion is not intellectual, but spiritual. The inward nature is conscious of the presence of something other than itself and ordered phenomena; other than thought, opinion, belief; of a Presence which is Power, Love, Blessing. This is *supernatural*. And in this Fact is God and Heaven, and Life Eternal. The Fact is more certain than demonstration, for mind, heart, life are all fired by it, and fused into a knowledge which transcends the intellect.

> 'In such access of mind, in such high honour
> Of visitation from the living God,
> Thought [is] not, in enjoyment it [expires].'

"It is certain as self is self, consciousness is consciousness, life is life. More happiness, and strength for life's duties come from the reading of the Word of God, and meditation upon its truths, than from any other single cause; and are in proportion to the regularity and devoutness of its study, and independent of surrounding conditions of life; are found, indeed, in the midst of squalid and miserable surroundings, and are absent from those conditions we esteem more favourable to happiness, when such reading and meditation are neglected. Those who have thus cut themselves off from the Divine life which vibrates and throbs in the Divine word are *blasé*, or are rapidly becoming *blasé;* that is, have already lost, or are losing, all enjoyment of life's simple pleasures. For the human soul needs the Divine life to complete itself, and finds its life in That, as the mist rises to its native heaven.

"It is not my intention to argue the question of the authenticity of the Old Testament; that would occupy too much time. I will only say, in passing to an aspect of the question that may be made clear to all, that the substantial accuracy of these ancient writings is a standing marvel, whenever they can be tested by comparison with other ancient history; and that if anyone reads the books themselves rather than criticisms about them, he cannot fail to be impressed with the elevation of their tone, their undying hope, as well as their advanced morals, side by side with the recognition of heights and depths of human experience, that amply embrace all the experiences of human life. The spirit of the holy gods is in them; and it is a striking fact that the Divine Life of Jesus Christ, which must needs have, if it is Divine, connections with

past history, is found in direct relation with those same Old Testament Scriptures.

"In regard to the genuineness of the New Testament, I will make only one remark (a remark whose force extends to the Old Testament): that it is a statute law of literary criticism, that books are ascribed to their genuine authors. I know of no reason why this statute law should not prevail in the case of the books of the New Testament. But I will not insist upon this. I will accept the lecturer's conclusion: he has told you that several of Paul's letters are genuine. This is undoubted. It is not doubted by any intelligent unbeliever. All tell us that the Epistles of Paul to the Romans, the Corinthians (i. and ii.), and the Galatians, were written by him. In these unquestioned letters we find every principal fact in the life of Jesus Christ, contained in the Gospels, from His birth to His resurrection. We turn to the Gospels, and we there find a detailed account of that life, falling into harmony with the facts given by Paul. Nor is this all: Paul lived and moved among the early Christians, the disciples of Jesus, and His many friends. His account of that life was therefore in harmony with theirs, which included the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the conclusion forced upon us may be stated in the words of a German Rationalist: 'There is no more certain fact in the history of the world, than that Jesus, the crucified, appeared in glory to His disciples.' On that fact my faith rests. It assures us that God, the inscrutable Power of Herbert Spencer, has spoken; and that we have in this New Testament the record of that Divine utterance.

"But the lecturer has suggested many difficulties.

They are easily suggested, for how can a finite mind comprehend the purposes and methods of an Infinite Being? But let me emphasise the position we have reached—the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. This most certain fact in the world's history remains a fact, whether we can explain difficulties that are raised, or not. A fact is a fact; and let no plausible statement of a difficulty, or of many difficulties, blind your eyes to its reality. We shall see reasons enough for our inability to understand God. Clouds and darkness are round about Him. The old-world philosopher well asked, 'Who can by searching find out God? Who can find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is higher than Heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than Hell, what canst thou know?' These are wise and weighty words. We are not able—these are but parts of His ways—to justify the ways of God to man.

"The lecturer has said that God does not answer prayer; that we cannot trace His action upon the movements of the world. In regard to prayer, he has partly answered himself, and has admitted that the action of man's will may be in part responsible for failure. The human will is a factor in the world. Man is an autonomy—a self-governing whole, and God cannot, without degrading him to a lower level, force his will. While man remains man he is free to pursue either an upward or a downward course. This fact constitutes man's discipline and probation. If influenced, it must be, not by overwhelming power, but by motive. In yielding himself to the motives presented he advances along the path of progress and blessing. The answer to prayer, which at

first spoke to him in whispering tones, becomes louder and clearer, and he never doubts that he has heard the Divine voice.

"In a passage of some power the lecturer emphasised what he called the silence of God, and sought to infer from the Divine method, so described, a conclusion negativing the Divine existence. But I would ask, Is there no other voice than that which falls upon our ear? If I look upon a beautiful scene, or painting, has it no voice because it does not speak to my ear? So, when I look upon these heavens, the work of His hands, is it not true that although

'There is neither speech nor language,

yet that they have a voice, which for ever says,

'The Hand that made us is Divine'?

When, again, I consider the course of history, and see it gradually manifesting a series of advances, disclosing a purpose, a beneficent end—here, too, a voice speaks of patience, wisdom, goodness; and when I interrogate my own nature, so fearfully and wonderfully made, and learn, from that investigation, its mysterious capacity—for degradation, for improvement; for suffering, for enjoyment; its affinity with things unseen; its sense of God, felt in awe, and the movement of conscience, its hope, undying hope of immortality; again I ask, Is there no voice in this? And then, when we find in history the life and words of Jesus Christ, within (as we believe) an area of the supernatural; a life and words which stand out in striking contrast with all the life which surrounds them,

like the spring of fresh water which bubbles up in the salt sea; then the voice becomes vocal and audible, which we have heard and felt. 'The silence of God' is a misleading figure of speech, for the world is full of voices, which speak to those who have ears to hear, voices which gather strength and power the more we become in touch with Him who is our life. But these voices—

> '. . . haunt the silence of the breast,
> Imagination calm and fair;
> The memory like a cloudless air;
> The conscience as a sea at rest.
>
> 'But when the heart is full of din,
> And doubt beside the portal waits,
> They can but listen at the gates,
> And hear the household jar within.'

Instances, authentic instances, abound, of answers to prayer, the truth of which no impartial mind can doubt. Just let me say in passing that prayer is a necessity of our nature. We pray instinctively—even the most careless. The more thoughtful and serious could not live without prayer. As a poor exile looks fondly back to the home he has left, and refreshes and revives his flagging energies by sweet thoughts of the home he hopes one day to revisit, so the troubled man fervently contemplates his far-off Home, reads about it, turns toward it in mind and heart, and prays to the God of heaven. For there is God, and Jesus the Mediator; angels and the spirits of just men made perfect.

"The lecturer related a personal experience; let me also refer to myself for a moment. Often when life

has become inexpressibly weary to me I have been lifted up, renewed and refreshed by the act of worship, public worship. My vision of unseen things has been quickened, hope strengthened, life refreshed, and I have returned to the facts of life invigorated for renewed exertions. Were it not for such occasional withdrawals from the facts of life, and acts of communion with the Life unseen, life would be intolerable, and would come to an end (as it too often does in the case of materialists) in voluntary death. Such renewal of life and hope in the act of worship is altogether apart from the reality of the Supernatural and its communications, in answer to prayer —is, in a way, the *natural* result of worship. Many a soul *could not* live without worship; and this psychical result is strong evidence of the reality of the spiritual world—the soul's co-relative. It is one purpose of prayer thus to comfort the soul. But this is not all. Prayer is answered, although not always—nor often, perhaps—as we expect. We pray in obedience to a divinely implanted instinct, but it does not therefore follow that our prayers will be literally answered. The Scriptures never lead us to think so. Even our Lord Jesus, whose life is presented to us in the sacred writings as Supernatural and Divine, did not always obtain His request. He placed Himself voluntarily under the limitations of human life, and accepted the consequences—the submission of His will to that of His Father. Like examples in Paul's life—so full of the Supernatural —are many. Paul prayed earnestly that he might, by the will of God, have a prosperous journey to Rome; he besought the prayers of his Roman converts that he might be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men. The

answer, in God's providence, was his deliverance into their hands, followed by two years' imprisonment in Cæsarea, and a disastrous voyage to Rome, ending in two years' imprisonment there. These are examples for our instruction; they teach us that the granting of our actual request is not assured to us; yet they are not without their advantage. That submission to the Divine will which they imply is an infinite benefit. But let me refer to the case mentioned by the lecturer—an instance which, he justly says, is typical of thousands and tens of thousands. I have in my ministerial career been witness of many such painful and harrowing scenes.

"The case referred to by the lecturer, the untimely death of the little child, belongs to a class of cases, death from disease or accident, which illustrates the operation of general laws. A child dies from disease or accident that was preventable. The law which works this dire evil was needed for the physical and moral welfare of mankind, and operates, in the case supposed, where it was preventable. There were hosts of angels looking on when the child lay out in the snow, and none stretched out a hand to protect the helpless child. Had they done so the neglect of those in this sphere would have been corrected by the care of those belonging to another sphere. The general laws of the universe would have been overruled. If such cases occurred we should soon leave the cultivation of our fields and the care of our children to the ministry of angels, and life would lose its probative and disciplinary character. The results of this abstinence are painful, but God brings good out of evil. The lecturer omitted to tell us the effect upon the mother, the father, of the bereave-

ment which he so pathetically described: the quickened faith, the chastened sorrow, the purified life, the quickened sympathies; of the effect of the chastened memory upon himself. God could not, if I may so speak with reverence, grant our prayers unless they were in accord with His divine purposes. He is ordering and guiding the whole universe. To relinquish His purposes at our request would be to govern the world in accordance with the designs of foolish and impatient man. He is a father, but a wise father, who looks for far-off divine results. Hence He does not act as a fallible human father would act.

"I remember a poem which describes in a powerful way the criticism of a simple monk upon a great painter's method. The painter is engaged upon the scene of the Last Supper, at the request and expense of some nobleman. After the lapse of twelve months the nobleman pays a visit to the monastery where the painter is engaged upon his work. Here he is informed by one of the monks that the artist is neglecting and spoiling his work: that after painting a beautiful head of the Saviour, which everybody admires, he suddenly washes it all out, and packing up his knapsack, goes away for weeks, and neglects his work. At another time, after drawing a speaking likeness of Judas, he treats it in like manner; and thus, many other charges of a similar character. The painter replies, 'What can the monk know about painting, or the purpose and aims of the inspired artist? That which satisfies him to the full only fills the artist with restless dissatisfaction. The picture is only in progress now; wait till it is finished.' Yes, God is painting a great picture, which is to last for ever. We see only a portion

of the great painting. Wait till the whole stands before us. Meanwhile He permits us to come and tell Him our ideas, our wishes; and sometimes He takes infinite pains to grant them. When He cannot do so He, like a kind father, pats His children on the head, and consoles them for their disappointment. I have somewhat anticipated the remarks I wished to make on Divine providence. In prayer God deals with us as individuals; in history we see His action upon the mass. Yet the mass is composed of individual souls, each of which is free to form his own life, and God puts no undue constraint upon him. He is touched, gently, by the Divine hand, and influenced rather than controlled. Yet the whole mass is under His guidance, as a vast fleet of boats is skilfully directed by some wise admiral. The occupant of each boat is free to go or stay, to choose his own course, yet the tide unconsciously bears him on, the wind and the waves concurring; yet so that he is quite at liberty to vary his course. Thus in the end He brings us to the haven where we would be. The tide, the wind, the wave, are His general laws; our own nature, full of diverse and warring faculties and propensities, is the ground of our discipline.

"As we look back over long stretches of time, we see that the world has advanced, and is advancing, towards the goal, the haven where He would have us. Thus we trace the hand of God in history. He is therefore working for that end which we all desire, the brotherhood of man, but He is working according to His own wise laws, whose results may be far off, but are sure. Let us respect and obey them. If we reject them, then He will oppose and correct us, and the blessing will be deferred. Let us not,

therefore, as the lecturer desires, cast Him out of our movement, but rather seek to conform to His will. His laws work freely; they cease to be His the moment we impose them upon ourselves and others by legislation. So far as they are legislative, they lose their Christian character. Christianity is not an external force, but an inward influence, impelling us, willingly, along the path of duty, which is not an absolute but a relative standard; varying from age to age, and among different nations. Thus it finds a home in all kinds and degrees of civilisation; yet tends ever to homogeneousness in the organised life, which it influences and moulds. It renews and vitalises whatever is good in human nature, and corrects its errors; it creates new motives and extends their application. It renews and purifies domestic affections, strengthens them, and enlarges their scope; and so creates the sense of brotherhood in man. All are children of one Father. Should its organised form fail, or become corrupt, it still lives, and by sporadic movement tends more and more to restore its organised form. Yet in all this its action is free and voluntary. It acts through each individual soul, through the voice of conscience. The moment it compels obedience by penal sanctions that moment it loses its essential character, and ceases to be Christian, taking its place as a political power among the nations of the earth, and its chance as such. They that take the sword shall perish by the sword. Thus there can be no such thing as Christian Socialism. The terms are mutually exclusive. Socialism aims at legislative action, Christianity does not, and cannot, without forfeiting its essential character.

"And now I have finished. God is in the world. Every

human being is a revelation of Him. He is a manifestation—a tainted and imperfect manifestation—of Him who called him into existence. Man, by giving way to evil propensities, which are for his discipline and correction, mars the Divine likeness within him; but its essential features are there.

"There is nothing more beautiful than a little child fresh from the Divine Hand, and as yet untainted. It is well said, of such is the kingdom of God. I have seen that beauty in the children of the poor as often as in the children of the rich. It is only when they pass from the protection of a well-ordered home—well-ordered although poor—and come under the action of a selfish world, that the stamp of the Divine likeness is effaced or becomes faint, and sometimes illegible. The bad example of others, their vices, sometimes their deliberate aims, acting upon our propensities, corrupt and destroy. Let me mention a case, of which I was reminded as I came to this room to-night. Many years ago there was a young girl in my schools; she was about eight years old at the time I refer to. Her parents were very poor, and she often came to school without her breakfast, poor child. It was and is our custom to provide a light meal after morning school, free of expense, for such cases. On this occasion she was in school, and had with her a little brother, aged six. When the dinner hour came, I saw her, with her arm shielding her little brother tenderly, and bringing him to the table. She had had no dinner the day before, which was Sunday; a neighbour had given her a piece of dry bread as she came with her hungry little brother to school, and this she had unselfishly relinquished to him, going

herself without any. This was the instinctive action of the nature which God had given to her. Now listen to the sequel. She went out into the world—the world of men and women—and the process I have mentioned commenced in her. I met her as I came here, *on the streets*, nearly drunk. And the agent in her destruction," the speaker continued, trembling in his excitement, "was the lecturer of to-night" (turning and pointing to him), "the Rev. Wilfrid Dunstan, the apostate priest!"

The excitement was intense, and loud cries filled the hall.

"Turn him out! Turn him out!"

"That's a lie!"

"No, it's true!"

"I remember him! Father Dunstan!"

The old man stood, calmly facing the excited audience for a time, and then walked deliberately down the open space to the end of the room and withdrew. I quickly followed, leaving the Rev. Wilfrid or Mr. Reynolds to explain and make his peace with his audience.

When I told this to Granvers he was delighted, and exclaimed,

"That's capital! The Rev. Wilfrid's leadership is over; he's a dead man, and may as well clear out. But the effect of such teaching will remain and ferment. It has been going on for years, and the people are permeated by it. They fear not God, neither regard man."

CHAPTER XXXII.

WE PART WITH AN OLD FRIEND.

THE next day I called at an early hour on my rapidly aging friend at Winchester Square. She received me with her usual sweet smile. I was surprised to notice a great change in her appearance, for I had not seen much of her recently. Her hair was perfectly white; and although her face retained its beautiful and delicate colour, yet age was evidently telling upon her; and it flashed upon my mind that the watchful care of Margaret might soon reach a period. She was amazed at the reappearance of Dunstan, and horrified at his lapse from the Christian faith. She listened with keen interest to my account of the meeting, and followed with renewed interest and intelligence my relation of the addresses delivered. She was delighted with Mr. Grately's reply to Dunstan, and expressed her appreciation and approval of his speech. When I came to the closing incident of that speech—the reference to Sarah Brownell—she was deeply agitated, and her tears flowed freely. "Poor girl, poor girl! we must find her, and endeavour to rescue her; we must save her." And I may stay the course of my narrative to say that she immediately put herself into communication with Mr. Grately, and obtained from him the fullest information respecting her. From him she learned that Sarah's descent was rapid and apparent; that he had done all in his power to awaken her to a better life, and lead her to

flee from that which she was following and its certain misery. He hoped that some impression had been made, for she promised to see him again. This promise was not fulfilled; and I must anticipate so far as to say that every effort to trace the unfortunate girl was unsuccessful. The vastness of London is a safe hiding place; and so Sarah was not found. "We must pray for her," was my friend's devout conclusion. In reference to Dunstan's lecture and its enthusiastic reception, Mrs. Benson said,

"I fear there is a terrible judgment awaiting the nation. We have neglected the people, exposed them to terrible temptation, by which their sufferings have been intensified, and their consciences seared; and now they are ripening for active outrage and violence. The cup of our iniquity may soon be full; it calls to the Lord of Hosts for judgment. Pray that it may yet be averted."

"There is little doubt," I replied, "that the people are ready for almost any action that would promise them temporary relief from the pressure of their miseries; and, led by false economic guides, they may take a course fatal alike to themselves and the country. False economic theories fill their minds, are in the air, and the people are ready to enforce them. All they want is power to enforce them, and this they may obtain at any moment. Should it be so, farewell to England's greatness."

Reverting to Mr. Grately's admirable and able exposition of Christianity, she remarked, "Yes, the Resurrection of our Lord is a certain fact, and that fact alone is evidence that God is with us, and assures us of the life Hereafter. It is the most certain fact in history; and is the ground of my hope: Jesus and the Resurrection; delivered for our

offences, raised again for our justification; and, believing this, we patiently wait, obeying His will, for the end. What He does we know not now, but we shall know hereafter; and possessing our souls in quietness and confidence, a deep peace keeps the soul, in whose deep silence we hear the voice of God's Spirit saying, 'This is the way, walk ye in it;' and thus we have an assurance of reality, as real as the evidence of sense. Ah, well! soon the day will break, and the shadows flee away, and the night of sorrow end. It cannot be long before it comes to me."

Here she paused, thoughtfully. When she resumed, for I did not care to intrude myself upon a line of thought that was so personal to herself, she said,

"My dear Sybil is happily married, and my sons settled and doing well. I am thankful for this. If only I saw Margaret settled in life before I go my cup would be full."

At this point I said: "Dear friend, I have something to say, that I have long wanted to say, which I hope you will receive with approval. I would like to have your consent to my speaking to Margaret—not now, not now. I know that she is devoted to the care of her mother, and would not hear of anything that would tend even to divert her love from one to whom she is passionately attached. I think she is right, and would not by a word or a hint change the current of her thoughts, were that possible; but when her loving care comes to a period, which may Heaven avert for many years yet, may I think that I have your consent to the course that I wish to take, and offer her my hand? she has long had my heart, which she has shared with you, my dearest and oldest friend."

She laid her hand on my shoulder and said, "Thank you. I could wish for nothing better for her. You have my fullest consent, and my blessing."

I stooped down and kissed her hand, saying, "Thank you, dear friend. Only one word, I would not distress Margaret's mind by a hint; nor would I that she should feel herself fettered in the least degree by her knowledge of your wish. I am content that things should be as they are, for what I trust will be a long, long time," and nothing more was said on the subject.

During the next two or three years many changes came. Dunstan did not disappear from the scene; but his influence was gone. He became a low-class agitator, and drank freely, earning a precarious living by writing. For the man was clever, and many who had known him, or of him in other days, although abhorring his life and opinions, put work in his way in order to give him a chance. Indeed, I must own that some of his brainwork found its way into the columns of the *London Express*. Granvers married the woman of his choice, with the full concurrence of her father, and was happy, and renewed his youth, although, like myself, he was moving on. Towards the close of the period named, Mrs. Benson's health rapidly failed, and we felt that the end was near. I was a constant and frequent visitor; and saw her often, sometimes visiting her in her room when she finally took to her bed. One day I was summoned in haste, and instinctively knew that the end was at hand. It was even so, my good old friend was dying; summoned home, she said. "I am going home, good friend," she remarked, as I entered, turning her face to me; "going home to-night. God wills it." She was

quoting Bickersteth's *Yesterday, To-day, and For Ever*, a book that was often in her hands.

Her children, who had been summoned to her bedside, were all present. Her two sons, and Sybil and her husband; and Mary too was in the room, overwhelmed with grief at the prospect of losing one who had been a mother to her. Margaret had never left her mother since the beginning of her illness. All were weeping, some more quietly than others, for she had been a fond and faithful mother; and this was realised by all. While the others stood around in their grief she strove to comfort them, and spoke in a calm, confident tone. "It is a sublime thing to die. The flesh fails, yet the mind is clear. The vital powers are feeble, yet hope is strong. Whence then this life, which is not physical, or the result of physical action, the action of the heart, for my pulse is feeble; of the brain, which is fed from the heart? whence but from God, the Supernatural, who is imparting to me His strength, by Divine methods, that cannot be explained, but are known by the blessed results? There is with me a Presence which comforts me, and assures me that death is only the gate of change, of everlasting life! Come, children," she continued, after a pause, "I am going Home, and from that Home shall, if permitted, watch over you, and wait for your coming. See how your mother's faith sustains her in death, as it sustained her in life. Yes," she exclaimed with energy, "fills her with hope and joy unspeakable." The irradiated face faintly echoed the energy of her assurance. "The dark valley is light, for the glorified form of the Saviour is there; and I am safe and happy." In such an exalted strain did she continue her conversation while

I remained. Her last moments were devoted to her children, who gathered round her, and closed her dying eyes. Far down the valley, the shadow feared of man falling upon her, until she was almost through it, apparently unconscious, suddenly her strength returned in one last effort, and she murmured, "Peace, peace, unutterable peace, from God"; and all was over on this side of the grave. I gently withdrew, with a sense of loss that cannot be expressed, and yet, too, with a sense of nearness to that which lies behind the veil which comforted me.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE NEW LEADER.

I COULD not speak to Margaret while the sense of her loss was fresh upon her, and resolved to let some months pass over before addressing her. Meanwhile changes were made. Margaret removed to a smaller house not very far from her old home, taking with her her friend and companion, Mary Brownell. Other changes of public concern were taking place, changes of importance in the condition of London. A new leader had appeared who was making himself a power among the people. I learnt this in part from Granvers, in part from the daily papers. I had arranged with the former to attend one of the

meetings that were being held, at which the new leader was to speak, but the event recently related had prevented me keeping this engagement; so I agreed to join him on a subsequent occasion.

An opportunity soon came, and Granvers and I arranged to be present. As we were on our way to the place of meeting, my friend said,

"This is a very superior man, very different from the Rev. Wilfrid. He is not known in London, but is an Englishman, well educated, of good speech and manners. He is a teetotaler, and is dead upon public-houses, and has got a strong hold of the people."

When he appeared upon the platform his enthusiastic reception confirmed this opinion. The speaker was a tall, handsome man, almost young, between thirty and forty; fair, yet somewhat tanned. He stood upright and fearless, like one accustomed to his position.

As I looked upon him, I found myself trying to recall a likeness that was far back in my memory, but without success. When he began to speak, he was immediately at home with his audience, and spoke like one of themselves, yet with a difference.

"You have," he said, "agitated and struggled for years to improve your position, and yet it is no better to-day than it was twenty years ago. The working classes are a numerical majority, and ought therefore to govern. We have failed because we have been like the bundle of sticks in the fable; we can only succeed by combination, but a combination which shall bind together all the working classes in this country must be on just and equitable lines. All we seek is: that we shall have the fruits of our own

industry—nothing less will content us; that we shall have access to the soil which God has given to the children of men—this is essential; that pauper immigration shall come to an end, and our own labour be protected against foreign competition (that is, against the competition of underpaid and overworked men); that England and her children be bound in close fiscal bonds against the world; and that a privileged class shall cease, that all men may be equal, with equal rights. These rights we must and can obtain by legislative action, for we are, as I have said, numerically the strongest, and the majority must rule.

"To this end take care that those whom you choose as representatives are honest and incorruptible men; not men who have an axe to grind, who can be bought by money bribes, or the offer of a director's or chairman's position in financial and speculative companies; or by the subtler bribe of an invitation to dinner. Least of all return men who are mere demagogues, seeking only their own advancement, the sale of their paper, or promotion to office and rank. Return upright and incorruptible men, and the battle is won."

The speech was simple, direct, and sincere, and impressed me greatly with the speaker's honesty and capacity to lead. The result of his speeches, delivered in many places, was that many persons who had hitherto stood aloof from the popular movement, repelled by the wild revolutionary talk of agitators, now joined the movement; it became wider, deeper, stronger every day. In the same strain he spoke in all the great towns and cities of the country, and everywhere aroused the utmost enthusiasm; everywhere created and combined a powerful political

party, animated by his own spirit, sure to exercise a powerful influence at the ballot-box.

As we walked homeward, Granvers said, "They have got their Leader at last, and now we must prepare for a fight. I must look to the police. His words now are moderate; but time and opposition will change all that; circumstances will carry him far beyond his present intentions. The first agents in the French Revolution never anticipated the Reign of Terror. And—mark my words! blood will flow in the streets of London. There are tens of thousands of wild beasts in human form in the poor haunts of London, made fierce and cruel by the pressure of unequal laws, by years of want and neglect, and by the false teaching of such as Dunstan."

I was deeply interested in Granvers' remarks, and in the principal subject of them, and thought a good deal about him during the day which followed the meeting.

With such thoughts in my mind, I was one day surprised, while busied at the office, to receive a card with the words "Mr. Thomas Routh" (the name of the great leader) printed upon it.

"He has called several times, sir," said the messenger, "when you have been out."

Mr. Routh entered easily, and, introducing himself, frankly gave me his hand. I offered him a seat, and expressed my pleasure at meeting him, as I wished to know more of his purpose and method.

"Ah," he replied, "I have nothing to add to what I say in public. I have called to see you on a private matter —not for publication," he added, smiling a pleasant smile. "I have been many years in Australia, and while there I met a man who spoke often of you—Brownell."

"What! Tom Brownell?"

"Yes, the same. Do you remember him? He remembers you well, and never forgets you. He is a great friend of mine, and charged me to call upon you."

I looked hastily at the refined face of my visitor, and noted his easy and gentlemanlike address, and thought of the little that he could have in common with poor Tom.

"He left behind him two sisters, to whom he is greatly attached, and of whom he is anxious to hear; and he thought you might know of their whereabouts."

"Strange, being so attached to them, that he has never communicated with them."

"Well, he did write several letters, he tells me, and received no replies from them."

"They never received any letters," I answered.

"They went astray probably, for I know that they were sent—that is, he has assured me that such was the case. They were probably wrongly addressed, for what would a poor lad remember of vast London and its many divisions?"

"Yes," I said reflectively, "that may be. I do know his sisters—at least, one of them."

"And the other?" he asked quickly—"is she dead?"

"Oh, no; worse, I fear."

He started up. "If—if any man has wronged her he had better keep out of Tom's way!" he exclaimed. "It will be a great blow to him," he added, resuming his seat and repressing with an effort his emotion. "He is a great friend of mine, and has often talked of his sisters and what he would do for them. And Mary?" he inquired —"that is the name of his eldest sister."

His face was hidden by his hands.

"Mary, thank God, is all right. She is living as companion with Miss Benson, the eldest daughter of Mrs. Benson, who was the poor mother's great friend."

"Yes, I know; Tom has often spoken of her and her kindness. And she?" he inquired gravely.

"Is dead."

"Dead. Well, it was to be expected. Many years have passed, and she would be a good age. It is fifteen or sixteen years since Tom left home—that is, London. He is well, and would like to hear of Mary. May I see her?"

"Certainly, she will be delighted to hear of her brother; so too will Miss Benson. And had Mrs. Benson been alive it would have gladdened her heart to hear of poor Tom. She often spoke of him and hoped well for him, for she thought him clever, and was touched by his affection for his mother."

"Tell me, if I am not troubling you too much, about Sarah?"

I replied by giving a short account of the unhappy girl. During the recital he remained silent, his face buried in his hands, yet appeared to be deeply moved by my painful story. At its close he rose and thanked me.

"If you will," he said, "kindly arrange with Mary to see me, I will be at your house" (he had taken the address) "at eleven o'clock."

I assented, and he bade me good-bye and walked out of the office with a grave and thoughtful face, but easily, like one accustomed to act freely and with authority. I lost little time in conveying the good news to Mary and Miss

Benson, both of whom were delighted (the latter on account of Mary, her companion and friend) to have at last some tidings of the lost brother.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE LOST BROTHER.

PUNCTUALLY at the hour named Mr. Routh arrived. His step was elastic, but his face grave. We lost no time in calling at Winchester Square, where we were asked into the drawing-room. Mary soon appeared alone. She gave her hand to the visitor, and said,

"You knew my brother Tom, sir?"

"Yes, Miss Brownell, well. He is my greatest friend" (Mary's face brightened), "and has charged me to call on you. He is very anxious to hear about his sisters." At the allusion to the missing sister both became silent. Mary observed Mr. Routh closely as he spoke, and seemed to be slightly disappointed. "He wishes you to be with him," he resumed. "Would you like to go to Australia or to remain in London?"

"I would like to be with my friends, but I would like to see Tom."

"Well; we'll see what can be done, Mary."

Mary again looked up eagerly. At this moment Margaret entered the room, and Mary said,

"This is Miss Benson, Mr. Routh."

"Yes," he replied, turning to her, and looking into

her face, as he took the hand she offered; "you are somewhat like what I remember of your mother."

"Tom!" exclaimed Mary, throwing her arms round him.

Yes, it was Tom after long years of separation. We were all interested and excited by the discovery. Tom, the poor, bright lad of sixteen, now a man of mature years, educated and gentlemanlike. After the brother and sister had had some time for mutual explanations, Tom, at Margaret's request, proceeded to give us some account of his Australian life, an account which I condense into the following paragraph.

On his arrival in Melbourne he, having adopted the name of his mother's family, got a place in an office at £100 a year, which was quickly advanced to £150 and £200. Before he was twenty-one he was receiving £300 a year. He lived carefully, and saved, investing his earnings in different ways, some of them in gold-mining, with always one purpose before him—to return to England and make a home for his sisters, the companions of his early sufferings. He was fortunate, and before he was seven-and-twenty was on the high road to wealth. He improved himself and took part in public affairs; became a member of Parliament; a Minister of the Crown—a position which he held for three years. This position brought him into contact with the best society of the colony, and enabled him still further to improve and advance himself. On his party going out of office, he resolved to realise part of his property and to return home. He had been some months in England; and after several vain attempts to find his sisters, had entered upon

his public career, a career which he had steadily kept before himself while in the colony. Such was the story—wonderful to the untravelled Englishman, which Tom told us. We learnt from him that his life was devoted to the enfranchisement and elevation of the poor, the class to which his father and mother belonged, and with whose sufferings his early life was identified.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE PEOPLE MUST RULE.

Tom now had time to hear more particularly all that I could tell him of his missing sister; and to my story he listened with the deepest attention. I did not feel justified in telling him of the part which Dunstan had played in the girl's ruin, but I told him all else that I knew, and of her chance meeting with Grately. He was very much affected; and recalled, with tears, the incident mentioned by Grately. He remembered it distinctly, for the wits of the poor are keen; that Sarah, hungry herself, had given him the crust received from the neighbours. He recalled many similar instances, which proved the natural unselfishness of little Sally, as he called her. As a kind of explanation of her fall, as it were to veil the heinousness of it from himself, he said, "How can it be expected that the children of the poor will regard such vices with reprobation? They are familiar with them from the moment that memory begins. They see and hear things that are

carefully hidden from the children of the rich, and often are tempted in mind and heart before they are out of their teens; and sometimes in actual experience. This ought not to be, and, please God, shall no longer be in old England." He instituted a thorough search for his sister, but without success. Meanwhile these private griefs and anxieties did not induce him to relax his public efforts for the consolidation of the popular party. A general election was at hand; and by general consent, Routh, as he continued to call himself, was regarded as its leader. His simple and direct speeches, combined with the fact of his being one of themselves, and his evident honesty of purpose, placed him immeasurably higher in popular estimation than any other possible leader. Under the influence of his speeches, blatant demagogy became silent; the mere partisan and office-seeker was brushed aside; and good men, good men in the main, were selected as popular candidates.

An overwhelming majority was returned to support the cause of Reform. The moderate reformers, whose desire to see a stable and capable Government usually kept them from the ballot boxes, or caused them to cast in their lot with the opposite side, threw in their lot with their natural friends and allies, with the result stated—an overwhelming majority against the existing Ministry. The Ministry resigned, and Routh was called to undertake the task of forming a new Ministry. This he did with wonderful tact, for his political experiences elsewhere had sharpened his political instincts. Lord Hopfield, I believe, might have had a seat in the Ministry, but pride and party feeling restrained him, and so a chance was lost. When the

House met, the Ministry lost little time in introducing their great Land Reform Bill. Its purpose was to nationalise the land—a Bill of spoliation some called it. There was one clause, called a benevolent clause, which made provision for the aged and poor whose lands were nationalised. In all other cases the land was transferred from private owners to the State without the payment of a shilling, and the only concession made to the late owners was, that they should have preferential rights in regard to occupancy. This advantage was conceded to them as a kind of compensation for their loss. Some, indeed many, on the popular side were opposed to the small concessions I have noted. Yet consideration prevailed, and the Bill passed in the form proposed. It was sent up to the House of Lords, and promptly, without ceremony, rejected. A good deal of temper was aroused by the manner of its rejection. An appeal to the country was made, with the result that a still larger majority of members was returned favourable to economic and social reform. Again the Bill was introduced, shorn of its benevolent and preferential clauses, for men's tempers were aroused; and contemporaneously a Bill for the abolition of the House of Lords was promoted. No other business was transacted till the Land Bill was through the Lower House. The Upper House on this occasion gave the Bill at least the appearance of decent treatment. Still it was rejected, emphasis being laid upon the fact that the benevolent and compensatory clauses were omitted from the Bill. The Ministry advised the Crown to create a sufficient number of peers to enable it to pass. The Sovereign might well be staggered at the idea of creating

three or four hundred peers, and hesitated, and finally refused. The Ministry resigned, and the Opposition was installed in office, but not in power. All England was stirred to the heart. Great excitement prevailed. The cry went up from every city and town, "The people must rule! The people must rule!" and energetic steps were taken to bring pressure to bear upon the Sovereign and the House of Lords. The House of Commons declined to recognise the right of a Ministry representing only a minority to occupy the Treasury Benches, and business was at a standstill. The idea of the Ministry was to gain time, and so arrange a compromise. But the popular side would have no compromise. "The people must rule!" became the watchword and cry of the party, a cry that was taken up in the streets, and shouted in alleys and slums: "The people must rule!"

Demonstrations in the streets and parks, before the Houses of Parliament and the offices of the Cabinet, were of daily occurrence, and showed the temper of the people, daily becoming bitterer and more uncompromising. Similar was the case in all the great cities. A day was fixed for a great united demonstration *of all England.* Trains were run from all the principal cities. In some cases where the directors were unwise enough to refuse such trains the people took possession of them, and directed the servants of the company to drive them to London, a direction that was promptly obeyed. The movement was the movement of a nation; it broke down and overflowed all barriers, like a great tide, threatening to sweep away all the old landmarks, and to confuse private and public rights if not to entirely obliterate the

former. "The people must rule!" was inscribed upon all banners. One man must die for the people. Resistance, exasperation, exacerbation, fury, followed each other in rapid succession. Men stood aghast and wondered what the end would be. Meanwhile preparations for the great demonstration went on apace, and the day opened that was fraught with such consequences to Great Britain.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE SACK OF LONDON.

It had been arranged that all routes should converge upon Trafalgar Square. There had been some idea of forbidding the demonstration; but it was argued that, even if such an attempt to prevent it were successful, which was extremely doubtful, it would issue in turning scores of places, all over London, into centres of the fiercest agitation, which would spread from place to place and set the whole of London in a revolutionary blaze. So the idea was abandoned, and it was resolved to let the excitement have its outing, and the procession was held.

The day, big with the fate of England, came—a bright, cold day in May; yet not unpleasant. The shops from one end of London to the other were closed.

The public-houses were open, as ever; and this was a fatal blunder. It would have been well if the Government had, the night before, detailed off all the police of London to seize and destroy the liquors that were on sale.

But this step was not taken, so the ever-ready publican was ready, as ever, to turn an honest penny by exciting the passions of the people. All other traffic was suspended, except the tramp of the mighty host, converging from all points upon Trafalgar Square and the parks. The police were skilfully disposed, the soldiers were not visible, yet they were in readiness to act upon any emergency.

The crowd came from all parts of London. Every street, and lane, and alley sent its contribution to swell the mighty host. They passed out from alley, and lane, and court in streamlets, and, joining other streamlets, became a great stream; these, again, united to other streams, became a river, which poured into the main streets, a mighty force, irresistible in its strength. This, again, ever gaining depth and width by the arrival of fresh tributaries, from all directions, heading into the City, the Circus, Fleet Street, the Strand. Over every bridge the mighty mass streamed into the ever-swelling host. Four, sometimes more, six, eight abreast they came, the earth trembling beneath their tread. Many, calm, determined-looking men, with faces set, animated by the determination that the people should rule; more, moved by the fierce levity of mere lawlessness; some, wild with the hope that at last their deliverance had come. Flower girls, with their baskets of bright bloom from the country, followed the crowd, and danced in and out among them, selling or giving away their flowers. For from henceforth they expected to get them for nothing from the land, which was soon to belong to the people. I stood near Westminster Bridge and watched the long procession

passing over it. On they came, a dirty, unwashed crowd, ragged and tattered, evidences of last night's carouse, renewed early this morning, upon them. All were armed with sticks, clubs, bludgeons, and they marched, conscious of their strength. A little flower girl danced up gleefully as the ranks, whose tread shook the bridge, passed on, and offered her flowers for sale. With coarse oaths and loud laughter they emptied her basket and threw it aside, leaving the child in tears.

I followed to Charing Cross, and got a stand on the elevated ground. The sight was amazing. All London, ay, all England, was up. Stream after stream poured into the Square, until it was blocked; and still the streams rolled in, driving out the crowd, by the sheer pressure of numbers, through the open spaces to the west and the north-west. Granvers was here, looking grave and depressed.

"The day has come," he exclaimed, "and England is doomed. We have done the best we can, but the police are a mere drop in the bucket to this host; nor can we trust either them or the soldiers."

Cheer after cheer rent the air, and the greatest enthusiasm was aroused—enthusiasm that was infectious. The presence of numbers, all animated by the same spirit and purpose, extended the enthusiasm to all; as fire leaps from house to house, so did the spirit and hopes of the people pass from one to another and animate the whole mass. I found myself even ready to join in the demonstration. While the people were pressing on, driving out by sheer force of numbers those already massed in Trafalgar Square, an effort was made by the

police to keep the crowd back from Piccadilly. Here the police were drawn up, behind them were the Horse Guards, hinting by their presence at the reserve of force and discipline that was yet available for the preservation of order. The mob insisted upon taking any route they chose. The police used their bâtons, the people their sticks and bludgeons, and a struggle commenced. While

> Those behind cried forward,
> Those in front cried back.

The mêlée deepened and spread, became momentarily more serious. For in addition to the exciting nature of the occasion, many, the greater number, were excited by stimulants, and were out for an outing. The police were overpowered, driven back upon their supports. Then was heard the loud cry, rising over all other cries, "Forward, charge!" and the cry spread from mouth to mouth, from group to group, that the Guards were charging the people. They rode in and out among the surging and entangled mass, using the flat of their sabres freely. The news spread like wildfire among the thronging people; and a wild effort to escape, on the part of the many, was made —the numerous streets converging at this point were so many facilities for flight and safety; and soon the Square was somewhat free. Still the Guards, excited by their exertions, and angered by the showers of stones which fell upon them, galloped furiously round the Square, trampling down and injuring many people.

At this moment a bugle-call was heard in the direction of Seven Dials. It was thought by many to be a summons to the soldiers, and hastened the retreat of all that could

escape. Within twenty minutes a movement of disciplined men was seen coming from St. Martin's Lane. They marched like well-trained men, and were armed. They were trained and disciplined, and were under skilful leadership. But they were not soldiers, they were citizens, men from various parts of England, of London, kept in reserve to fight the people's battles. Rapidly forming as they emerged, they came on at the double. The Colonel of the Guards saw at a glance what the movement foreboded, and hastily drew his men together for immediate action. Before the charge that was intended could be carried into effect, the dark ranks of the citizen soldiery deployed into line, and at the cry of their leader prepared to fire. At the cry of "Fire" the conflict began. Numbers of the Guards fell, among them their gallant colonel; and the riderless horses careered wildly about the Square.

Again the cry of "Charge, charge!" rose high over all sounds, and the black horses came down thunderingly upon the kneeling ranks, rapidly closed up; in vain—no effort could break the serried ranks, for these were trained Englishmen, while volley after volley emptied saddle after saddle of the Guardsmen, who finally retreated, "all that was left of them." Meanwhile, the foot regiments had been hurried up to the scene of conflict, one of whom went over to the enemy bodily. And so the conflict raged during the day. From street to street, from house to house, the fight was continued with varying success, and night only stayed the carnage. Meanwhile, the crowd, broken and enraged, with passions inflamed, was let loose all over London, and scenes of robbery and bloodshed were of momentary occurrence.

During the early evening I had hurried to Miss Benson's house, only to find the doors open and the house rifled; what remained lying about the floor, broken or torn, in confusion and disorder. No sight of Margaret or Mary. Hoping that they were in safety, that perhaps they had been cared for by Routh, I, with a heavy heart, returned to the City, to watch the work of pillage and destruction.

Every moment tidings of the work of destruction were made known. Buckingham Palace was on fire; so, too, St. James's; Marlborough House and Kensington Palace followed. The various clubs, irrespective of party—the Carlton, the Reform, the Devonshire—all were destroyed. Boodle's, White's, Brooks's—indeed any and every house distinguished by reputation or size was wantonly destroyed, with numerous others, in that awful night. The fire leapt from house to house, from street to street, and the whole city seemed afire, for no efforts were made to check the progress of the flames. The miserable inhabitants, pursued by drunken and brutal men, fled, or endeavoured to flee, to places of safety. The streets ran blood—blood shed recklessly, wantonly.

Between 10 and 11 o'clock, as I came up towards the Strand, I met the Rev. Arthur Grately.

"Ah!" he said, "it has come; the judgment of Heaven upon those sins which cried in bitter cries and tears to Him for vengeance."

I walked with the old man, as I felt that the streets were unsafe. When we reached the church of St. Clement the Dane, we saw a crowd pursuing a young woman, who ran into our arms.

"Save me!" she exclaimed, as she reached us. We

resolved to protect her against her cowardly pursuers, who, seeing two stalwart and sober men, turned off. The woman was trembling violently and crying hysterically. The instant I saw her face, I recognised her. It was the long missing Sarah Brownell. When she knew that she was in the hands of friends she became calmer, and spoke quietly to Mr. Grately and myself. We told her of Tom's return, which greatly excited her.

"Oh!" she cried. "Oh, that I had died when Tom and I were little—when I was at your school, Mr. Grately, a good little child. Oh, the sin and misery of my life. I want to repent; I want to repent. God help me. I have tried and cannot; the drink, the drink!"

Mr. Grately's gentle voice fell like dew upon her parched spirit, and drew her out of herself, as he told her of an infinite love, greater even than the love of a mother. "Can a woman forget her sucking child? yea, she may forget; yet will I not forget thee. No, my dear, He is your Father, and God so loved the world—even this wicked, violent, bloodthirsty world—that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

"O, I am thankful, if it is not too late."

"Never too late, never too late," said Mr. Grately emphatically.

We had now reached a more crowded portion of the street, and turned into a by-street. Here, too, people were hurrying to and fro. The air was full of sounds, to which we had become familiar; sounds, often, of firearms, which exploded every moment. We hurried on, and when we reached a spot where the ground rose I heard a voice,

"Here's one of 'em." A loud report followed, and Mr. Grately fell, dead at our feet. Sarah stooped down to lift up the old man's head, his white hair now dabbled in blood. When she realised that he was dead, her anguish and grief knew no bounds. Standing up, regardless of safety, she exclaimed to the group from which the shot was fired—

"You cruel murderers; more cruel than the tiger. You have killed your best friend, and the friend of the poor and destitute."

"He was a parson," exclaimed one of the group. "Get on with you!"

"No, no; I will die with him."

And a second shot fulfilled her wish. Almost at the same moment a tall man rushed down the street crying wildly for help. "He's another of 'em, I know him," was heard, and another shot was fired, and the unfortunate wretch fell with his head nearly touching that of Sarah. I was stooping down examining her; suddenly her eyes opened, and her look fell upon the face of the dying man by her side. She shuddered visibly, and with an effort drew herself away, crying, "Keep away, keep away;" then, more softly, "Mother; I'm coming, mother," as she had often cried in her childhood's days. "I'm coming, mother;" and then the hand of death gently closed her eyes. The eyes of the fallen man were open and staring. I looked at him, the death film was rapidly darkening their light. Our eyes met. It was Dunstan. A rigid hardness was settling upon his face, which darkened under the scowl that now passed over it, as he murmured, "God, God, the way—way—hard." Uttering which he passed beyond the reach of human hope.

I could do nothing for my friends, and the place was beset with danger, so I continued my homeward route. I reached home about twelve o'clock. The doors were open, the house dark. I got a light, and an awful scene presented itself to my gaze—the dead body of Mary Brownell, and by her side that of Margaret Benson (they had evidently fled to me for protection). I knelt down by the side of Margaret and felt her pulse; it still flickered. She opened her eyes and saw me. A sweet smile passed over her face, as she murmured, "You have been long in coming, dear; kiss me, Will." I kissed her, and while I held her in my arms she passed to that land where "beyond these voices there is peace."

Carefully placing the bodies of the two friends on the bed that remained, and reverently veiling their faces, I sat down, overcome and violently agitated. I sat by the side of my writing-table, my hands lying listlessly before me. As I thus sat my attention was drawn to a singular appearance in the ring on my left hand. The stone in it was plain; but now, to-night, as I sat in the darkened room, it glowed and shimmered, as if it were on fire. I examined it more closely, and could see the flames leaping and swirling. To examine it more closely still, I carefully took it off my finger. The instant I drew it off I was powerfully convulsed, as if by an electric shock, and lost momentary consciousness

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE WITCH'S CAVERN AGAIN—VISIONS OF THE END.

WHEN I recovered consciousness, I was lying softly shaded from the light by overarching branches of the rugged elm, through which the moonbeams faintly struggled. By my side, her long raiment almost touching me, stood the Sibyl. I sat up, and sprang to my feet.

"You have slept long and easily," said the Sibyl. "I have kept watch over you as you slept, but you are wearied and want refreshment. This will revive you," she added, putting a small glass to my lips.

I obeyed her movement, and drank of that which she offered; and at once I felt a revival of life, and a consciousness of mental vigour.

"Your task is not yet ended, and the dawn hastens apace. Come," and again she held my hand in a warm embrace.

London, the London I had just left, was before me! Everywhere fire, fire; flames burst out in the north and in the south, in the east and in the west, and rapidly consumed the palaces of the rich and the hovels of the poor. I could hear the roaring of the vast conflagration, and could feel the overpowering heat. The streets were filled with horror-stricken people, many of whom fled in consternation from the devouring flames. I could see many whom I knew well in the crowd. Granvers, now without occupation, and by his side, protected by his presence, Lady Lilias, a deepened grief and melancholy obscuring the beauty of her face. Lord Hopfield, too, was there, pride

and sorrow mingled in the expression of his once haughty look; and many others with whom I had only a casual acquaintance. I looked eagerly, if perchance the last tragedy I had witnessed had been a mere dream; but the forms of Margaret and Mary were not present. There was one form (the face was hidden from me) which seemed to be perfectly familiar to me, yet I could not give it a name. It stood by the side of Granvers, who spoke from time to time to the Unknown.

Meanwhile, the conflagration spread, and burnt more and more fiercely, consuming houses as if they were dry straw; nor houses only, for the bodies of the slain which lay in the street were lapped up by the devouring fire, or cast into the flames by onlookers and consumed. Nor were the dead the only victims. I saw a mob (they cannot be otherwise described) ransacking a burning hotel. The wretched landlord was striving to make his escape from the flames that were consuming his house. But the drunken crowd drove him back with mocking laughter, and gradually, despite all his frantic efforts, despite his appeals for mercy, pushed him with poles into the flames.

"He's had lots of my money," said one.

"And turned me out of his house after robbing me of mine," answered another.

"Let him burn," cried a woman. "If it hadn't been for him me and my husband would have lived in comfort."

And the poor wretch perished before my eyes.

While the houses were burning, the crowd was busied looting the various places, and with barbaric cruelty torturing the miserable owners. I never thought to see Englishmen behave with such fiendish cruelty. But years

of misgovernment and false teaching had made the heart that was human callous to suffering and indifferent to all appeals for mercy.

Granvers and the Unknown were near, and I could hear the voice of the former:

"England is doomed; Canada, I hear, has gone; so too have Australia and Africa; India is in revolt, and Russia is moving upon her with rapid steps. God help our fellow-countrymen there!"

"Let them go," shouted someone; "England for the English, say I."

The Unknown replied,

"The day of retribution has come; long delayed, it has come at last; the cup of our iniquity is full."

At this moment a slow sad strain fell upon my ears—the Dead March in Saul. The mournful strain filled the air, and drew nearer. Turning my eyes in the direction of the sound, I saw a column of citizen and other soldiers, heading into the street with heavy, measured tread. In front marched a small corps, carrying before them three or four gallows, from two of which the sickening forms of two men dangled! While from the centre of the column the sorrowful strains of the Dead March arose. At the head of the column, directing its movements, marched Tom Brownell, whose face was fixed and stern. Pointing with his sword to a man engaged in the congenial game of looting, he said sternly, "Up with him," and almost as he spoke the corps of executioners threw a rope round his neck, and he was hanging from the gallows, his eyes starting from his head. The crowd fell back horrorstruck amid a great hush, while over all the roar of the flames the voice of Brownell rose.

"Men and citizens, enough has been done, you are free; not another life shall be taken; we are brethren, and these gallows," pointing with his sword to the horrid figures dangling from them, "shall protect the life of every peaceful citizen. Every hand lifted to take life, to destroy property, is lifted against the people of this free country. To your homes."

"We have none," shouted someone from the crowd.

"Put out these fires, and there are enough and to spare. On, men!"

And again the melancholy wail of the music arose, and again the measured tread of the soldiery filled the street. The lesson was not lost, and was repeated elsewhere, and its echoes reached to distant parts. By nightfall order was restored, and the work of salvation and restoration went on to the solemn, saddening march. I drew a long sigh of relief as I felt my hand released, and realised that it was all a dream. But before I could offer a remark the Sibyl again took my hand, and another scene was before me.

* * * * *

Still London, but how changed. No longer vast and appalling in its vastness. The East-end was levelled to the ground, and covered with trees and undergrowth; the Strand, once crowded with busy men and revellers, a tangled forest; the several well-known parts of London separated one from another by wide and thickly-timbered parks or fields. Yet though appreciably reduced in size, still large and still filled with population, though sensibly smaller. The Revolution had left its mark upon it, in this way if in no other. I looked eagerly among the full

streets for the faces of old friends, but saw none, not one that I had known; all were gone, except a form that was strangely familiar to me—the form of the Unknown, whose face was still hidden from me. His long grey hair reached down to his shoulders, and he no longer moved with the elasticity of youth. I looked eagerly for the beneficial changes that the Revolution was to inaugurate, but was disappointed. Everywhere I saw evidences of poverty; everywhere the public-house and the gin-shop as of old; still self-seeking and self-indulgent men and women; the crowd ragged and miserable, and hugging their misery; on its outskirts the poor night-walker that filled the streets of London years before.

While I thus looked and carefully noted the changes that time had brought, two young men approached the spot where stood the Unknown, with his back towards me. One was saying,

"England is going to the dogs, I tell you. The population is daily diminishing, and those that remain can't get a living. I shall clear out."

"You forget, my friend," was the reply, "that England cannot maintain half its former population since the change in the beastly climate. But an industrious man can always do well in England. If there is no wealth, there is no grinding poverty, as in the good old days before the Revolution. We are all free and have an equal chance. I speak as I find; I have done well."

"Yes, but you are one in a thousand. I don't see why the honest and industrious should have to support the lazy and vicious as we do under the precious Socialistic Republic. We all cast into the pool in unequal contributions, and all

take out in equal proportion. This is contrary to nature. What do you think, sir?"

The question was addressed to the Unknown. I leaned forward eagerly to catch his reply. The voice came to me as from afar, and yet it seemed like the voice of one known to me long ago.

"I have learned," said the voice, "that forms of government and changes of laws have very little to do with a people's prosperity and happiness. Without freedom, virtue, and industry no people can be prosperous; with them no people can be unhappy."

"You are right, sir; and I'm blest if I'm going to stay in England—I'll emigrate."

And the strangers passed on.

The Unknown remained thoughtfully in his place for a moment, and then moved off. I followed with my eye, which seemed to have a preternatural keenness, and saw him enter a cemetery, where was the funeral of a little child. The mourners were the father and mother, and the remainder of their children—all wretchedly clad. A clergyman vested in white, with a black stole, conducted the service, and consigned the poor coffin, containing the mother's child, to the tomb. After the service was concluded, I saw the Unknown pause before the grave, and heard him address a few words of sympathy to the stricken parents. The mother's tears burst out afresh.

"He might have lived, sir, but we could not give him proper attention or sufficient nourishment—so he died."

The recital was followed by a fresh burst of weeping. The stranger moved on towards another grave, and going down upon his knees began to clean the weeds from it

After this was done, he passed to the old and worn headstone and traced the letters upon the stone. I read—

SACRED TO THE MEMORY
OF
MARGARET BENSON
AND
MARY BROWNELL,
SLAIN IN
THE GREAT REVOLUTION.

My tears fell fast.

Again the stranger stood by another grave lying contiguous to the former. This, too, he carefully cleared of its weeds, and then read over the inscription—

SACRED TO THE MEMORY
OF
LAWRENCE GRANVERS,
DIED MAY, 1945,
ALSO OF LILIAS HIS WIFE,
DIED JUNE, 1954.

The letters were almost illegible. Again my tears flowed freely, and I was much agitated, for memories of the old times thronged upon me. The Sibyl's hold relaxed its grasp, and I stood beside her in the cavern, feeling glad that it was all a dream.

* * * * *

Before I could express myself, I felt her hand tighten round my own, and again looked upon a still more melancholy scene—London, but oh! how changed. The several populated portions reduced to mere villages; the field and the forest encroaching everywhere upon habitation; the bridges

broken down and decaying, the waters of the Thames overflowing its banks and filling the depressed levels and turning them into swamps. Still, people cheerless and comfortless filled the streets. Again I saw the Unknown, his grey hair falling below his shoulders, his face still veiled and hidden.

The snow was falling in the streets and on the hills, and filling the valleys, still the poor went about the streets, and tumbled out of the frowsy gin-shops. I saw one poor woman in tattered clothes, with a child at her side, equally wretched, pass shivering along the cold street, through which a frosty wind blew. She stopped before the stranger and begged him, in a whining voice, for the love of God, to help her. He put his hand into his pocket and gave her something, which brightened her face and quickened her steps. Still from the gin-palace came the drunken song, and the poor night-walker stood about its doors, as of old, as of old; for human nature never changes, and is always the same, always the same. Again I heard the steps of men hurrying along the pavement, saw them wrapping their warm cloaks around them.

Two men, no longer young, moved slowly in front of me, and talked earnestly. "I am not going to stand it any longer," said one. "Things are worse than they were before the Great Revolution. Then whatever a man earned was his own, now it belongs to everybody; then a man could please himself, and live or starve, now he is driven by an iron hand."

"Yes, yes," was the reply; "but now we are all equal, and everyone works for the other."

"More for the other than himself. Every man's entitled

to the fruits of his own labour by the law of nature; and the stimulus of necessity developes character. Now all are legally equal, and a dire monotony is the result. No more Shakespeares, no more Tennysons, no more genius; for what is yours is mine, and what is mine is my own, says the Socialist leveller. I shall go to a land which gives scope and opportunity for developement and self-improvement, where human nature can spread and grow. I don't want to see all the trees which Nature has made so divine cut to one pattern; the cutting destroys their beauty, and kills them."

Again an appeal was made to the Unknown, and again his voice came to me as the far-off echo of a voice that I knew. "Nature's law is freedom, only freedom that shall not restrict another's liberty. Ye are free, only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. Love cannot be compelled by law. It is a free impulse of the soul. England's freedom has passed away, and with it England's greatness. It has passed to her children."

"And I!" exclaimed the questioner, "will go to her children—Canada, Africa, Australia. Thank you, sir," and he lifted his hat reverently to the stranger, who was left alone. Now, I saw that he leant heavily upon a stick and moved with difficulty. Pausing for a moment, he exclaimed, "How long, O Lord, holy and true; how long!

> 'Alas! for this grey shadow once a man.
>
> * * * *
>
> The woods decay, the woods decay and fall,
> The vapours weep their burthen to the ground,
> Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,

And after many a summer dies the swan.
Me only cruel immortality
Consumes: I wither slowly in thine arms,
Here at the quiet limit of the world,
A white-hair'd shadow, roaming like a dream
The ever-silent space, . . .
Far-folded mists, and gleaming halls of morn.'

Fated to see the decay of my country, yet death comes not to me.

'Alas! for this grey shadow once a man.'"

Uttering these words in melancholy tone, the stranger passed on, my eyes and ears following him intently. He passed into the cemetery, the snow falling round him. Again he stopped before a grave, and, as before, stooped to brush away the snow, to clear away the weeds. The headstone was broken and gone, yet I recognised the site. The crumbling stone, yielding to the hand of time, marked the last resting-place of her I loved, of Lawrence Granvers, my friend.

Feebly he leant upon his stick and looked long and earnestly at the sinking graves. I could imagine the tears running down his cheeks. As he thus stood, a weird wind arose, and, whirling the snow around, shook the red leaves from the trees and awakened a mournful sound in the barren branches. At this moment a low soft wail of music fell upon my ear. It was the wail of the Dead March, and the old man sank gently to earth upon the grave of Margaret Benson, his face turned to the light. I looked eagerly at the upturned face and gave a cry. It was myself! and burst into tears.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE STORY THAT CAME IN WITH THE FIRST AND WILL GO OUT WITH THE LAST MAN.

THE violence of my emotion woke me, and I found myself lying upon a soft bed, the snow falling softly, and the cold wind blowing across my face. I felt that I was lying upon Margaret's grave, and looked quickly for the headstone. I saw only the head of the iron bedstead. I sat up and looked around me. The snow that I saw was falling lightly outside my room, the wind was blowing gently, but chillily, through my open window. All was gone—the cave, the witch, and London of the nineteenth century, with its visionary successors. I was profoundly moved, and could not rid myself of the sense of the reality of all that I had seen in vision. While thus struggling with myself Rayner Maynard entered, and said,

"Why, Will, not up yet! Mary's expecting you to breakfast."

"Is Mary alive, and Margaret?" I asked.

Rayner laughed. "Alive? I should think so, and wanting breakfast; so hurry down as quickly as you can. You don't mean to say you haven't been to bed and that you have slept with that window open all night. What will Mary say? But please," he went on, shutting the window, "hurry down, for we have heard that we are to depart to-morrow, and want to make a long day of it in London." So saying Rayner left me.

On entering the breakfast-room, I was beset by a host of questions and comments. "Why didn't you go to bed?" "Why did you leave your window open?" "You have a dreadful cold."

"So you thought Margaret and I were dead. How grave you look, Will," said my sister.

"I may well be grave," was my reply as I took a seat at the breakfast table. "For I have passed through several metamorphoses, and have lived five hundred years."

"In other words, you have had a bad dream; please tell us all about it," said Fowler.

I promised to do so, and the conversation passed to other subjects.

"We have heard from the Captain that we must leave to-morrow," said Mary; "and to-day, therefore, must be devoted to saying our adieus to London. While this weather lasts, Will, you had better keep house, or that cold will not be improved."

To this suggestion I readily assented, with a glance at Miss Marsten, who had not joined the rest in my persecution.

"But I hope you will leave somebody behind to entertain the poor invalid," still looking at Miss Marsten.

"Oh, yes, I would stay, but you know that will be impossible, so, if Margaret doesn't object, we will leave you under her care."

"That will do capitally, if Miss Marsten doesn't mind."

"You can sing to me, if you will," I said, "and I'll promise to be very patient and good."

While I reclined on the sofa, after the several members

of the party had departed to their respective engagements, as Miss Marsten was busied about the room, I watched her movements with interest. Her tall well-shaped figure, closely clad in some warm stuff, her dress prettily set off with colours, showing a small foot, all made a pretty picture. Her fair face and grey eyes, pleasantly animated, suddenly recalled to my memory the face and expression of Margaret Benson, and I experienced a sense of relief and a glow of pleasure. She was the Margaret of my dream. It was she who had suggested the character, and Margaret was not dead. Hence my sense of relief.

Coming closer to me, Miss Marsten said, "You promised, Mr. Farley, to tell me about your dream."

"Call me Will, dear," I replied, "and take this seat, while I will selfishly take the easy-chair."

She took the seat indicated, which was almost touching the one I occupied.

"So you dreamt that your sister and I were dead—how dreadful! How did it happen?"

"I am not sure that it was you and Mary in my dream."

The slightest shade of disappointment, I fancied, passed over her face.

"I dreamt that I met a young lady whose name was Margaret Benson, and that I fell deeply in love with her—was devotedly attached to her. Indeed," I continued, "I do not think I can ever love anybody as I loved her." Margaret smiled slightly at this, and drew her chair a little further off. "No," I said, "I am sure I can never love again." I put my hand on hers. "Let me describe her. She was tall, fair, and lovely, and as good as she

was beautiful. And do you know, dear, that although her name, in my dream, was Margaret Benson, yet I am sure that her name in reality is Margaret Marsten. For she and you are the same person." The pressure of her hand answered mine. "And when she was dying, dear, do you know what she said?"

Margaret lifted her eyes to mine as I rose up from my chair. "She said this—'Kiss me, Will;' and—and—"

I did not finish my story in words, for Margaret's lips were pressed to mine.

"This is a pleasanter ending than that in the dream, dear," I whispered, as her head lay upon my shoulder.

"Yes," was the soft response.

When Mary returned, I fancy she took things in at a glance; for women notice so quickly, and draw inferences with equal celerity and accuracy in respect to some matters. Nothing, however, was said on the subject. After lunch, as the sun was bright and warm and all trace of cold had passed away, I said that I proposed to visit Belgrave Forest. Mary and Rayner could not join me (I did not regret this), so Margaret and myself, as we had arranged in the morning, explored its recesses alone. Here was the avenue of elms, there flowed the waters of the Thames, but there was no cave—only a slight recess in the line of elms.

"This," I said, smiling, drawing Margaret to me, "must be the site of the cave. And here, dear, I saw the Sibyl—and do you know, I think you were the Sibyl too. That Sibyl's song was responsible for my long dream, and you owe me compensation for all my sufferings." The notes of the cuckoo came to us from afar. Song answering

song, as lip answered lip, and we were very happy. "But we shall have to wait, dear, for our custom forbids early marriages."

"I am content to wait, so long as I have your love and presence, and am sometimes able to hear the song of the cuckoo," she said, smiling.

At dinner Fowler said, "To-morrow we leave London for ever. So I must conclude all my researches; and Ethel has promised her valuable assistance."

"And I," said Mary, "must see Will's cave and the moonlight, and perhaps we shall hear the nightingale—the air is balmy."

"Agreed," I replied. "I should like to see it for the last time before leaving England."

And so it came about that Mary and Rayner, Margaret and myself, visited the Witch's Cave, under conditions like those which obtained when I saw it in my dream. The moonlight struggled through the overarching elms and dotted the earth with fantastic shadows, and burnished the passing waters with silver. Mary and Rayner were at one end of the avenue, Margaret and I were not so hurried. As we stood realising the full beauty of the scene, the trill of the nightingale filled the air with delicious sound; the air seemed to be alive with song, a fitting accompaniment to the old story, which began in the Garden of Eden, and will never die while man is man and human hopes and passions remain.

"I shall never forget old England, dear; will you?"

"Never, nor the song of the nightingale and the note of the cuckoo. I do not know which is sweetest; I like the nightingale best now."

At supper we were all as merry as children, despite our to-morrow's departure.

"I shall never forget old England," said Rayner.

I laughed, and replied, "These are the very words I used in the Witch's Cave."

"And what did she say?" asked Mary, looking mischievously at Margaret, whose face got crimson.

"What did you say?" I retorted, turning the tables on Mary.

It was now her turn to blush, as she replied, innocently, "I said I should always remember it, especially the Witch's Cave and the song of the nightingale."

The next morning we started for Gravesend, and found the captain making ready to leave for Plymouth. We sailed at nightfall, and early next morning were at Plymouth. Our kind friends gave us a hearty welcome when we went ashore, and wished us to stay for a day or two. As the captain had decided to leave again that same evening, we could not accede to the hospitable entreaties of our friends. We, however, visited with them several fresh sites, and, in the afternoon, paid our final visit to Mount Edgecumbe. As we stood in the shade of the forest trees the songs of numerous cuckoos came to us in answering notes. A song never to be forgotten—for we have no note like it in Australia. Before evening came we bade our friends a long good-bye, and left the shores of old England. We watched the delicate green of the open land deepen into brown and dark; the ragged outline of forest and elevation, softly rounding, as we receded from the shore. And when the whole land lay behind us silhouetted and outlined by the faint moonlight,

which now softened the scene, we gathered together on the upper deck and sang an old, old song—

"Shades of evening, close not o'er us,
Leave our lonely bark awhile;
Morn, alas, will not restore us
Yonder dim and distant isle."

Then as I turned from the rapidly passing land to look into the sweet face of my Margaret, I said, "I think, dear, when Australia is overcrowded, we will return to the old home and repopulate England. We are English, for England is the home of our fathers."

JUDD AND Co., LTD., Printers, 73 & 75, Farringdon Road, E.C.

00093942

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 05 October, 2018